REQUIEM FOR MY RAVE

THE STORY OF ANABOLIC FROLIC, HAPPY HARDCORE, AND HULLABALOO!

CHRIS FROLIC

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For Robin.

You'll always be the love of my life.

CONTENTS

PART ONE: Press Start.....1

Introduction.....3

Some Better Days.....9

Beneficial Malfunction.....15

Start at the Beginning.....19

Getting from There to Here.....35

Going to My First Rave.....43

Raves Continued.....51

PART TWO: Skill Shot.....55

Becoming a DJ.....57

1996.....67

To be Successful You Must Project Success.....73

Happy2bHardcore Builds.....81

PART THREE: Multi-Ball.....87

Hullabaloo! is Born.....89

Living in the Office.....97

Phase 2.....103

Hulla 2.....107

Meeting Robin.....113

Building Momentum.....121

Robin Gets on a Plane....127
Anabolic Frolic Goes to the UK....131
Back Home, Bills to Pay....137
Trying to Figure it Out....141
Starving Artist....145
Make or Break....149

PART FOUR: Jackpot....153
Robin Moves to Toronto....155
Hullabaloo Birthday Funtopia 1....159
The World Electronic Music Festival....163
No Rest for the Wicked....175
Year 2....181
Introducing the HullaBoard....187
Firing on All Cylinders....189
Robin Gets Sick....197
1999....201
Friendship Crew....207
Big Top....211
Foreverland....217
Summer of Love....225

PART FIVE: Tilt Warning....229
Reality Comes Knocking....231
Starting to Come Undone....237
Forming the Toronto Dance Safety Committee....241

PART SIX: Tilt.....245
A View to a Thrill.....247
TDSC Meetings.....263
For Those Who Know.....267
Ooh Crikey, Wot a Scorcher!.....275
A Knock at the Door.....281
The Inquest.....285
Group Hug.....291
The Inquest Begins.....299
Robin Gets Worse.....317
The Inquest Ends.....323
iDance.....329

PART SEVEN: Special When Lit.....335
Banned in the USA.....337
Harassment Keeps Coming.....345
Hulla Returns.....353
Happy Hour.....359
Rhythm of Life.....365
Group Hug 2001.....371
Summer 2001.....375
New Realities of the Rave Scene.....381
Anabolic Frolic Gets High.....387

PART EIGHT: Shoot Again 397
Hullabaloo Evolved 399
Robin Update.....405
Summer 2002 409
Hulla Continued.....415
We're Having a Baby 417
2004.....421

PART NINE: Wizard Mode 425
All Good Things Must Come to an End.....427
One More Group Hug 443
Epilogue.....451
Where are they now? 457
About the Author.....461
Photos.....463

THANK YOU

While I aimed to tell the most authentic version of my story as my memory will allow, my memory is not infallible. When possible, I referenced video, audio recordings, and/or court transcripts, and I also asked some people for their recollections of events. Some names have been changed. While I'm writing about people who exist in real life, the way they are portrayed in this book is my understanding of them. The people discussed in this book are all very special to me then and now and will always be, so it's my hope they feel I did right by them.

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part one

PRESS START

INTRODUCTION

The noise was deafening, unlike any noise you might hear anywhere else. Nothing was like this. Thousands of young partiers, around 3000 of them, blowing their whistles and screaming simultaneously. It pierced into your brain, but it was also the sound of pure joy. It was also almost six in the morning.

This particular morning was a cold Canadian one at the Docks Entertainment Complex in the Toronto Port Lands—really the middle of nowhere, but with a beautiful view across a slice of Lake Ontario to the tall modern buildings of downtown Toronto. The lake was frozen over, with the wind blowing snow across its glass surface. Inside the venue the windows were steamy with condensation from the humidity of thousands of dancers, creating running tears on the inside glass. The city was sleeping, as the ear-piercing noise filled the club.

There was a rave happening here, one of the illicit all-night events of myth and legend. This wasn't any old rave, however; this was a "Hullabaloo!", affectionately referred to as "Hulla," one of history's most celebrated and revered rave promotions. The members of the crowd weren't just ravers but were the most colorful collection of "Hulla Ravers" you would ever come across.

The noise was meant in appreciation for me, Chris, better known to a generation of ravers as Anabolic Frolic, their DJ of the past hour. And also, the promoter of Hullabaloo, this very event that they so appreciated.

The venue was packed, a sold-out night, one of many for me and Hullabaloo. As a DJ, I was responsible for the best-selling electronic music series of its time, Happy2bHardcore. I had single-handedly popularized a unique style of electronic music, imported from the UK to North America. A whole generation of young people celebrated me and my music and the gift of receiving it from me.

A journalist for a major US magazine had flown to Toronto to cover this event. The legend of Hullabaloo was out there. We had built a reputation as one of the greatest rave experiences there was, and people were travelling from all over the world to attend. The journalist was here to document this phenomenon, along with a photographer shooting photos of the revelers, their costumes, their joy.

I had almost finished my set; I had one last song to play. A raver had asked if he could propose to his girlfriend onstage immediately following my set—a celebration of their love in front of everyone. I told him yes, to hang close, I'd invite him to the stage.

I was about to wrap up my set and pose for a photo onstage with the thousands of ravers behind me—the "money shot" for the magazine article. I was getting ready for that and ready to invite the young couple.

I spotted my good friend Will Chang, better known at Hullabaloo as "Klubmasta Will," at the side of the stage. He approached me.

"The guy. He's dead."

My heart didn't just sink; it was crushed. How the hell could this happen at our events? There had been a stabbing earlier in the night, a young man taken to hospital. Now I'd just been hit with this news and had to suck it up for a photo in front of the ravers. And what exactly was this article going to cover, now, with this news happening while the reporters were in the building?

This photo, the same one used on the cover of this book, would eventually lead off a huge article in URB Magazine, the largest electronica-related magazine in the U.S. I love this photo for the visual of it, but it's also a permanent reminder of the news that I had just been given seconds before.

I forced myself to address the crowd as if nothing was wrong. I don't even recall what I said, other than thanking them for coming, and then I handed the mic over to the raver to propose. She accepted, and they hugged onstage as the crowd blew their whistles. Such a dichotomy of emotions and events happening right in front of me. A literal celebration of life amidst death.

I went to the Docks main office to sit. Robin, my girlfriend, was there, still wearing the body of a giant dog mascot costume she had been dancing onstage in during my set. Her head looked small poking out of the top, her red hair in braids. Will came in and sat with us quietly.

"I don't know how we'll ever have another Hullabaloo," I told him solemnly.

It hurt to say these words. The work we did with Hullabaloo and the lives we affected really mattered to a lot of young people. I felt tremendous responsibility to them.

However, the real reason I said this, and the shocking thing, beyond a murder happening under our roof, was that we were only 18 months removed from another death, a drug overdose that had happened at a past Hullabaloo called A View to a Thrill. Another young man had died in the midst of all this revelry.

I had always thought that the events at A View to a Thrill were a one-in-a-million. That was the only way I was able to keep doing business. We all fought hard to save our scene, because we believed in it as a positive force. So many lives touched. Friendships made. Romances. Marriages. Children. Now someone was dead. Again. And murdered this time. How does one keep going when

touched by death twice? How could you ever think it couldn't happen again if it had indeed happened again?

The police were already in the building, had been for hours, starting their investigation when the initial ambulance had been called. They would now be taking every single person's name and information on the way out as a potential witness to a murder. This was how the night was going to end. Somewhere else, a family was getting the worst phone call imaginable.

I felt sick. Nauseous. My chest was tight. Lightning had struck me a second time. Was it just misfortune and bad luck that this happened to go down at my event?

Two people were now dead under my watch, with all the collateral trauma that entailed. Even though these horrible incidents were not caused by my hands, I was forever tied to them.

I didn't know how much I could take of this. It had been bad the last time; how much worse would it be, finding myself at the centre of this kind of attention once again?

The police and authorities saw me as an evil predator of young people, packing thousands of them into dark rooms where they dined on ecstasy and repetitive electronic music and strobing lights.

My fans saw me as a pioneer of a new youth culture movement, of promoting peace and love, celebrating unity. A facilitator creating a group consciousness, giving them an outlet to be themselves, design new fashion, meet like-minded people, celebrate the music that they loved, and maybe get an opportunity to change the world—a world better than the one we came into. This was bigger than me and was important to a lot of people.

Should we abandon all of that? How should I handle this? Where do I go from here? How much trouble am I in?

I had no idea at the time.

From: Jed Eye
To: Anabolic Frolic

I've been a supporter of the rave scene for many years now and I understand what you're going through. Keep your chin up and look for the silver lining! Things can only get better.

(Posted on the Internet)

chapter 1

SOME BETTER DAYS

I feel the need to jump the needle here to one of our better days, a time when nothing like this was even on the radar. I've always referred to the summer of 1999 as our own "Summer of Love," the arguable peak of the rave scene while it still clung to its ideals and none of the bad stuff had crept in yet.

June 21, 1999, was the date of our second anniversary event, titled Birthday Funtopia 2.

It was as classic a rave as you could imagine. The location was a gutted old bingo hall building in northern Toronto, surrounded by highways and tons of space to make as much noise as you wanted.

The interior was semi-demolished, prepping to turn the space into a nightclub. Tonight it was a bare building, to be used for a single purpose. The front entrance had a large trash bin beside it for the demolition, but that didn't affect our plans.

The indoor main arena could hold thousands. Large rear doors opened to the back, which held an outdoor stage under a big top tent, a fenced-in chill-out area that even included a 30-foot-tall bright yellow and red inflatable slide.

The weather on this day would be favorable to us, perfect June weather allowing everyone to spend as much time outside as inside.

Hullabaloo had grown from hundreds of people two years earlier to this sold-out event of 5000. All the tickets had been sold in advance, which had become a Hullabaloo tradition.

It was the peak of the "candy raver" fashions, which Hullabaloo was at the forefront of. Everywhere you looked were party kids in homemade fun-fur overalls, brightly colored beaded necklaces, hats—kooky costumes as creative as the people who made them.

It was 1 a.m., time for the main Anabolic Frolic anniversary set. The main room was packed to capacity, filled with dedicated "Hulla Ravers" wanting to share this historic moment.

The MCs spoke over the 75,000 watt sound system. A tower of bass-bins and speakers stood to either side of the stage. Trussing holding dozens of intelligent lights filled the room from one side all the way to the other, all of it built from scratch all day long by dedicated technicians. It was meant to overwhelm and overstimulate the attendees.

At the centre of the stage was the altar, a table with two Technics 1200 turntables and a mixer. I stood behind it, smiling out at the crowd, appreciating this moment. The room was filled to bursting with ravers, an ocean of bodies, appearing as shadows in the dark dance floor dotted by glowsticks.

The MCs, whose job it was to complement the DJ and work the crowd, occupied a stage in front of the turntables.

MC E-by-gum: "Right, time for my little speech as per usual. Right, as it was said earlier, the first Hullabaloo was started off with five hundred people at the E! Network. That place is closed down now, but it all started off with a dream of a happy hardcore DJ. Goes zero to hero in a matter of minutes. This is absolutely brilliant right."

MC JD: "The man responsible for giving you two years of wicked vibes, wicked parties, wicked atmosphere, wicked music, the one, the only, Mr. Anabolic Frolic!"

The crowd was unleashed. The sound was deafening. Sustained noise exposure like this would clearly cause permanent hearing damage.

MC E-by-gum: "OK, one more thing, party kids. Last year, we couldn't believe we made it one whole year. And this is what we did. We sung Happy Birthday to Hullabaloo. Right, we are going to sing happy birthday to Hullabaloo on the count of three. One…two…three…"

Thousands of voices sang along to Happy Birthday to Hullabaloo—a rave. It both was beautiful and would appear extremely odd to anyone not there. After they finished, there was another eruption of noise.

It was now time for me to take over. I had my first 12-inch piece of vinyl cued up and ready. I pressed the play button at the corner of the turntable and slid the mixer over. The first heavy beat of my first record blasted from the speaker stacks; the room shook while pyro effects blew overhead. The unmistakable smell of sulfur from fired-off pyrotechnics filled the air, masking the cigarette odor and smoke that normally filled the room.

The place was electric and would stay that way. The sustained energy, the dancing, the noise—this was what Hullabaloo was all about. This was why they came. This was what they wanted. And they got it and were unified in it.

Around halfway through the set, the MCs motioned to me to bring the track down. I lowered the volume at the end of the track.

MC E-by-gum: "Right, if you've been to Hullabaloo before, you know I always make my DJ, Anabolic Frolic, stop his set. Well, today I'm going to do something different. I'm going to make Anabolic Frolic come up to the microphone and speak to you lot. If you want to hear Anabolic Frolic…make some noise!"

Oh…fuck. E-by-gum was being a sadist now. He had gone completely off script. At this stage of my career, I was not one to

get on the mic. I did few interviews. Old video footage of this era and before never showed me speaking on-camera; I always spoke through my music and the events. In later years, I would develop a radio show and get much better in front of the crowd, but today was not that day.

E-by gum: "Get up here, get up here, Frolic!"

The crowd blew their whistles and horns. Of course they wanted me to get out from behind the decks and in front of them. I smiled nervously as I walked around the edge of the turntables to the front stage. I was handed the mic.

I was awed even more by the crowd, being so close, as if by an ocean break wall. All eyes were on me, from among the mass of humanity and colors of the crowd. I made eye contact with a young woman, maybe 18 years old, with the biggest smile on her face. She had lit up alien antennae sticking out of her hair, blinking. She held out her hand. I slid my palm across hers as I moved to the front.

Somewhere, somehow, something came to me, from pure instinct.

"I don't think I can hear you loud enough yet," I challenged the crowd.

My mind raced—what to do next—as the crowd's noise pierced my eardrums.

"Now you know the feeling, mate," whispered E-by-gum into my ear.

I laughed nervously. *What do I do with this moment? How do I not look like an ass? How do I harness the energy of this crowd?* Then something came to me.

"I've only got two words to say…Happy Hullabaloo!" I yelled into the mic.

The crowd erupted. What more was there to say?

I consider the events we had held from late 1998 until this night in 1999 as a string of perfect raves. Historic and world-class. We didn't have a care in the world. It was all about this moment, being a part of it. We didn't even fully understand what "it" was, but it was pure. We had no idea what might be coming, and that didn't matter.

From: Lisa Loves Anabolic
To: Anabolic Frolic

I am in awe of you. I was at the Hullabaloo party this last weekend (my first) and have never in my life seen anything like it. We drove all the way up from Chicago just to see you and we had no idea what we were in for—no matter how much hype we had heard. You are truly a man of vision and integrity, and your love for the music and all of us shone through the entire night.

When it was time to sing happy birthday, I began to cry uncontrollably. I have never been part of something so amazing ever.

Thank you Chris. I feel I owe you a personal debt for what you have given me (and all of us).

Good luck with everything you do, and keep those ravers smiling the way only you can.

(Posted on the Internet)

chapter 2

BENEFICIAL MALFUNCTION

One of my hobbies is collecting and playing pinball machines. I've actually built a pretty kick-ass arcade in my basement, called Frolic's Arcade, complete with 15 pinball machines. I modeled it after the arcades I spent time in during my youth, but it's not filled with games of yesteryear. Frolic's Arcade is a monument to the state-of-the-art in stimulation, not unlike what I had built with my raves. New games, new experiences, and an oversaturation of LEDs and sounds. When a crowd is over, there is a beautiful cacophony of noises, voices, and lights.

No detail has been left untouched, including a custom neon "Frolic's" sign and a change machine with custom-minted Frolic's Arcade tokens.

Friends of mine will remark, "Yeah, this seems about right for you."

Pinball is a big part of my life these days. I play with the Toronto Pinball League once a week, and Robin hosts a monthly "Toronto Pinball Vixens" league at our arcade.

Pinball has allowed me to make new friends and new connections since my rave days ended, and I'm grateful for that.

But pinball being a mechanical game where a hardened steel ball flies around the playfield at high speed, things will inevitably break.

Sometimes when things break, they might be things of little consequence, like a cosmetic piece of plastic. Or they could be more serious but still acceptable, like a switch that is not detecting the ball somewhere. They could also be game-breaking, like your flippers not flipping, so your ball drains.

However, there is also the possibility of a "beneficial malfunction." Something broke, but it benefits the player. Perhaps an obstruction is blocking the ball from being drained. In a competitive situation, like a pinball tournament, the player would actually not be allowed to continue playing with this beneficial malfunction. The game has to be stopped and the malfunction corrected.

I'm writing about the events in this book twenty years after they happened. Only after twenty years and after a lot of therapy and self-work am I able to clearly see what was happening and finally heal enough to tell my story.

My own beneficial malfunction carried me through some dark times, and only recently did living with it become untenable. I now have clarity about it that I can share.

From: Ryan
To: Anabolic Frolic

Thank you for the gift of Anabolic Frolic. I still listen to the three disks that I still own. Those that I don't, I can still catch online.

I had just wanted to say that your tracks kept me going through some of the darkest depressions I've had. I've never abused drugs, and have only drank socially. But your music was often my medication. Just enough for one more day.

You took me along exploratory journeys showing me worlds you couldn't imagine otherwise.

With love and respect

(Posted on the Internet)

chapter 3

START AT THE BEGINNING

I wasn't born a famous DJ and rave promoter—far from it, as you can imagine. I was born on October 1, 1974, to Greg and June Samojlenko. My sister, Tara, followed a year later.

One of my few childhood memories was of my sister and me playing with matches. I would strike the matches and throw them across the room, watching these little fireballs fly through the air. Tara, who must have been three at the time, would laugh and shriek in delight.

Years later, I get shivers every time I hear news stories about kids burning their house down when they play with matches. We were just lucky, I guess; the match would extinguish while it flew through the air, before it hit the carpet. In another universe, my story could easily be much shorter.

My dad bought me an actual bow and arrows for my ninth birthday. He owned a small hobby farm that we would spend time at. One of the games we invented was "Shoot the arrow in the air and don't get hit." I would shoot an arrow straight up into the air, with all of my strength. Then I and the rest of the kids who played the game would scramble not to get hit by it.

I can recall one incident of this game where I shot the arrow up, and my sister, without looking up, and while maintaining eye contact with me, sidestepped one body length to the left. A mo-

ment later, the arrow landed straight down where she had been standing and sunk itself into the earth with all of its force. We all laughed, as kids, with a "Wow, that was a close one" giggle.

I recounted this story to my sister in recent years. She had no memory of it, but she was horrified at the idea, gasping, "Oh my god, I almost died!"

My parents split up when I was four years old. I don't remember much, and as with young memories, those I remember are very dreamlike. I recall cowering on a bed, witnessing my parents screaming at each other in front of me.

When my parents split, there was a nasty fight for custody. In an unusual decision for the time, during the late 1970s, my father was granted custody after playing his ace-in-the-hole: we would live together in my grandmother's house, with her available to watch my sister and me. My mother, who worked at the nearby hospital as a pharmacy technician, couldn't compete with this daycare solution. So my father was granted primary custody, with my mother getting visitation on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and every second weekend.

It had been my mom's decision to leave my father, and he handled it very poorly and with much vindictiveness. Another of my few memories of that time was after the separation. My mother was still living in their house, before it later sold, and my father was living at his original family home with my grandmother.

I can recall sitting inside the living room at my mother's house and seeing my father hop into the backyard. He didn't knock or say hello or alert my mother he was there. He was there for one reason. We had a family dog, a German Sheppard named "Picasso." My mother had named him after her favorite artist.

I bore witness that day to my father approaching the dog, attaching a leash to his neck, and then taking him away. My father stole the dog, and my mother was too emotionally exhausted to

do anything about it or bring him back. (Picasso stayed with my dad until Picasso died of old age.)

As my mother prepared the house for sale, another memory I have was my father taking all the garbage bags from outside the property and going through all the garbage at my grandmother's house. I remember finding some semi-dried-up markers in the trash, that I used to draw while my father went through the rest.

As I write this and think of my mother's condition during all of this, I feel really bad for her.

I spent most of my childhood growing up in my grandmother's house.

My grandmother, whom we called "Baba," was your classic Eastern European grandmother, short and squat, with as much love for you as sternness. Living with her wasn't too bad. She lived in service to her family, and most of my memories of her today are of her in the kitchen; as with many grandmothers, she showed her love through her cooking. We ate well—lots of classic Ukrainian dishes, hot lunches, and dinners—and she was always home if we needed her.

She was born in the Ukraine in 1922 and had a tough life from the get-go. After her parents died of typhus and fever when she was a child, her early years were spent as an orphan, living on her aunt's farm. The Ukraine went through a devastating man-made famine from 1932 to 1933 that killed millions of people; she was around 10 years old at that time. She spoke of the soldiers that would arrive and take all the farm's food. Her aunt would hide their cow in the home so it would not be taken, while Baba's brother hid her away in the attic. She lost four of her siblings to starvation or typhus.

Things didn't get much better for some time. World War Two began when she was seventeen, and she was caught and held pris-

oner in a German forced labour camp. Her duties included collecting dead bodies off the road and putting them into carts.

I actually didn't hear much about this part of her life until the events of 9/11. As she watched the nightmare of that day on TV, a flood of memories came back, along with the horrors of the war. Only then would I hear about collecting the dead bodies, of the men who died in her arms.

Immediately following the war, she married an Italian accordion player. He would father my dad and my uncle Ugor before being killed tragically by a moving truck when my father was five years old. Baba managed to get through it and eventually immigrated to Canada with my father and uncle. She would later remarry in Canada, another Russian immigrant, and have a third son when she was 41 years old—Yuri, who was only twelve years older than me.

When I moved into my grandmother's house, Yuri was still a teenager living at home, in high school at the time. He was not only my uncle but was also named my godfather. Yet even though he was an uncle, in many ways he felt like a big brother, and I idolized him—from his interest in music, synthesizers, his teenage life, and friends to owning his own car and being able to take us places, like family cottage getaways.

My grandmother lived beside the Experimental Farm in Ottawa, the only functioning farm inside a city in the world. Government owned and run, it's 1250 acres of fields, forests, and ponds, a kid's wonderland to play and explore in. I would just disappear for the day and come home for dinnertime.

I used to think of our home life as pretty normal, but now I understand the concept of multigenerational trauma and how it played out in our home. There was screaming in our house every day. Screaming and anger from my grandmother toward my father and his screaming back. Then there was the screaming at me.

I used to think I had a decent childhood, because when compared to the worst abuse stories, I had nothing to complain about. However, I see now how my "beneficial malfunction" had formed.

My father cannot contain his anger. Like a switch, he can go from zero to 100 over relatively nothing. Today, when I visit with him and bring my children, I find he can last about half an hour before he starts yelling.

One time, when my children were aged 6 and 9, they found themselves bored in this old person's house, so as kids do, they started to make their own fun, exploring the basement. And suddenly, I could hear my father yelling at them for being down there. They came upstairs and started to spin on a reclining chair in the living room. I actually remember this chair; it was white with large cushions, and it pretty much looked exactly the same as it had when I used to spin it when I was little. Here were my kids doing the exact same thing thirty years later.

But my father couldn't handle it and started yelling at them. At that point, I could do the one thing no one was able to do for me back then: I took my kids, and we left.

I think back about when I was my children's ages, how there was no one there to protect me from my father's rage and anger. How I could only do the one thing a little kid could do—cower in fear.

This was the start of the beneficial malfunction. Compartmentalizing my fear, my anger, my anxiety. It was a survival technique.

Yet my father has said in recent years, "I never laid my hands on you," which is technically true (well, mostly). In his mind, he never crossed any line.

However, I can remember the times where he threatened me with a folded-over belt, making that terrible snap noise as he pulled it tight. As a young boy, I experienced terror, cowering,

making myself small. I recognize the sadism in a grown adult man snapping a belt at a cowering child. I also can see the context of multigenerational trauma, and how he was formed this way by his own experiences as a child with my grandmother, who came from the worst horrors one can imagine.

Then there was the mental abuse. A very common threat of his was, "I'm going to bring you to Children's Aid." The threat was that there was a place he could just dump me off, like an orphanage. My mind went to the musical, "Annie."

I would plead and cry for him to please not take me there. It's terrorizing to have a parent threaten to withdraw their love and dump you somewhere. I have no memory of what triggered these threats, but it would have been the most normal kid trouble you might come up with. Only in hindsight do I recognize that the place he was threatening to take me was the place that might have helped me and actually been a threat to him. But as a child, none of this logic was there, only the terror of the threat.

I also learned never to ask for help, because I could never risk an angry response that I was bothering him. Don't ask for a lift somewhere. Don't ask for his time. Don't ask for anything. If you do, you risk an explosion of anger for bothering him—he was tired from his work, his back was sore, he needed time to rest. It was best never to ask for help, ever.

My mother, through this time, suffered from debilitating depression. Much of my memory of spending the visitation weekends with her was of her being in bed for much of the weekend, unable to function.

The extreme self-reliance I developed would come up as another beneficial malfunction over the years. One particularly life-changing development happened when I was twelve years old.

It was the last couple days of seventh grade before summer vacation. It was late June, 1987, and the summer heat was already

oppressive. Walking down a street, the city had that heat effect, soaking it up and radiating it back.

In a nearby strip plaza, I spotted a computer-printed sign that said, "CompuFun Computers and Video Games—Opening Soon."

I had always been a computer kid, growing up in the era when most people didn't own a computer yet. When I was nine years old, I had saved my allowance for a Commodore VIC20 with a cassette drive. I plugged it into an old black-and-white television, and I spent many years creating games on it.

At the time, I didn't know what possessed me to do this, but now I see the beneficial malfunction at work as, at twelve years old, I walked up the stairs to the not-yet-opened-store and let myself in.

The store was a mess, full of cardboard boxes, merchandise, old computers, and some of the newly released Nintendo Entertainment System, which had not yet hit it big. Two bi-spectacled young men were hunched over with a price gun. When they noticed me, I spoke nervously.

"Hi, do you guys need any help around here?" I barely got the words out.

The younger one looked at the older one, who shook his head no.

"I'll work for free," I rebutted. My beneficial malfunction of self-reliance was working for me. I also recognize now that I might have been seeking something from this place, some community, some mentorship.

The older one responded with a conceding smile, "Well, I guess we can use someone on joysticks." And just like that, I was in. The first and last time I ever applied for a job began and ended with CompuFun Computer and Video Games.

School ended a couple of days later, and instead of enjoying the summer outdoors with my friends, I was in this cramped little store.

The place was kind of a dump, filled with cardboard boxes filled with old games, cartridges, and computer disks. Folding tables were used. I would learn that the owner sold stuff every weekend at flea markets, and the store looked like leftover storage.

The two other people here were brothers: the owner, 25-year-old Jack Howard and his 16-year-old brother Harry. This was Jack's second attempt at a video game store, having had one years earlier during the Atari boom period, but that store had burned down. In the years since, he had sold at flea markets.

No job was too menial for me to do, no matter what I was (or wasn't) getting paid. My first job involved assembling joysticks from surplus parts. That wasn't too bad. A worse job, though, was testing videotapes.

Back then, in the 1980s, VHS videotape was still worth a lot of money. Jack had acquired some very cheap blank tape that he sold at the store and at flea markets for half the price you'd normally pay at retail. The problem was that this tape was very poor quality, and often customers complained. Jack's solution was to test each tape with 30 seconds of test-pattern footage and then review it. If it wasn't full of distortion, that tape could be sold; otherwise, it was junked.

My job then became sitting at a desk all day, video recording this test pattern and then reviewing the tape. All day. For free.

Some of my other jobs involved cleaning the toilet, cleaning old used game systems, "vacuuming" the floor by picking up all lint on my hands and knees, and basically doing anything they asked of me. My reward was lunch, which was bought for me.

Looking back on this, I have no problem with this kind of character-building work. I chose to be there, and I could just not

show up if I didn't want to do it anymore. I think everyone needs to clean a toilet in their life, and I feel sorry for those who never do this kind of work. That's why I always respect a kid who's worked at McDonald's. I know they've been worked hard, and they have my respect. I won't make fun of where they worked.

The summer of 1987 was a big one for video games. After several dead years, home gaming was making a big comeback with the 8-bit Nintendo Entertainment System (NES). The distribution channels for it then weren't as mature as they are now, and the NES became a hot commodity. At the time, CompuFun was the only video game store in town, and we became the go-to store for all gamers.

We didn't just sell video games, we rented them, and were early pioneers in used games. Your literal one-stop shop. I realize that this is the template now for large video game chains, but we were doing it first, way back in 1987.

Before long, the "computer" of CompuFun was overshadowed by the "Video Games."

CompuFun was becoming a huge success, and in months, it opened its second store. Then a third, a new flagship store in downtown Toronto.

After my initial summer of working for lunches, Jack had an offer for me. He sold Atari ST computers, and I had really enjoyed my time with the ST in the store and wanted one. His offer was to make a down payment, and I could work the rest off as barter, $3.00 an hour. That was still below the $3.90 minimum wage of the time, but I was still below the legal working age by many years.

My father came through for me with particularly generous birthday cash to help me get this computer. Between the down payment and the barter, I was the proud owner of a brand new Atari 520ST. This computer would be very important to me over

my teenage years, and the ripples of being a computer owner at this age would carry through the rest of my life.

At thirteen years of age, I began serving customers and taking on more duties. I loved working there, and during my entire grade 8 year, I went to the store and worked during my lunch hour, since the school was only minutes away. I would literally show up at lunch, grab a pricing gun and label games for sale, then go back to school. I also worked Fridays and weekends.

Jack and Harry left my original store to continue opening new locations. The original store I worked in was hugely successful for such a small, dumpy place. I continued to work part-time and had the distinction of being "Employee #1" while others came and went.

The biggest test of my morality, working there, happened when I was fifteen years old. The store at that time had a manager and about six part-time employees. I'm not sure where this idea came from, but one of the staff realized we could buy games from the customers at below the list value and then, in turn, sell them to the store and pocket the difference. Over a given day, you could pocket an extra $20–$40.

Even at my young age, I realized this wasn't completely ethical. When a customer would come in to sell used games, I refused to participate myself, but I would pass them on to another employee who was involved in the scam. I knew and felt this wasn't right, but I didn't want to be a rat either.

After a couple of months of this, I was asked to go work for a day at another CompuFun location. I guess there was some suspicion at the time, and I was asked then if we were buying games for less from the customers. Not knowing what to do, I denied it, but I did report to my manager, Mark, that there were some questions being asked. He asked me if I'd told them anything, which I hadn't, and things continued as normal.

I wasn't aware of it, but this used game skim was just the tip of the iceberg. Mark and other employees were involved in some flat-out stealing, selling games for cash and pocketing the money. I guess because I wasn't fully on-board with the used games, I was kept in the dark about the other stuff.

It came to a head when, one night at home, I was called by Harry Howard, the owner's younger brother. He reported that the entire staff had been fired for stealing. Everyone except me, because everyone had stepped forward to make it clear that I wasn't involved and would pass on the customers at those times to the others.

The one part I did fail was in not telling Jack what was going on in his store, and they were disappointed in me. Harry suggested I call Jack and apologize for doing so. I sucked it up and made that call. I felt really bad for letting Jack down. We had had years together.

There's not a single person I know who hasn't stolen from their job, but this was a valuable lesson for me early in life about morality and why it's important to be an honest person. If you stay honest, there's nothing to get caught. It's something I've tried to live by since.

Since all the staff were fired, that left fifteen-year-old me and one other part timer, a fourteen-year-old kid named Pete Potvin. It was summer break from school, so I became the default manager and was in there morning and night. I'd open and close the store, cash out, and take care of everything that needed to be done. Summertime wasn't as busy as the Christmas season, so Pete and I managed to get through on our own.

When September rolled around, Harry Howard returned to take over the store, and I returned to working part-time while in high school.

I loved to work and lost interest in school. I was one of those students who rolled in as the bell went and went home exactly five seconds after school ended. No extracurricular activities for me; I was focused on my job.

I also didn't participate much in social things at school. I only went to one high school dance, and despite having some school crushes, I never pursued them to develop any sort of girlfriend relationship.

As a teenager in high school, I'd be aware that some of my classmates were using drugs, even getting high on weed or acid before coming into class. It seemed kind of normal, but at the same time, because I didn't run in those circles, I was never really exposed to it.

I had schoolmates whom I'd hang with at lunch, but primarily, I enjoyed socializing with my CompuFun co-workers, who were generally much older.

Each subsequent year, I lost more interest in school and started taking an excessive number of days off. Because I wasn't seen as one of the trouble-making rebellious kids at school, my days off went pretty much unchallenged. I could disappear for a week and just resume as if nothing had happened. I was never a bad student, always doing enough to get by, so things just continued that way.

In hindsight, it is odd to me that neither of my parents were paying enough attention to realize what was going on.

I never missed a day at work, though, even if I was legitimately sick. As a teenager of sixteen or seventeen years of age, I was making really good money. Enough that I decided I should help my mom out with rent. I was living with my mother again, having moved back in with her when I was fourteen after getting tired of my father's temper and yelling. She struggled by on her paycheck, so I ended up giving her $200 a month to help.

By twelfth grade, however, my skipping school was becoming a huge problem. My mom would make sure I'd leave for school, but all I'd do was pretend to go and come home again after she left. To get around the school contacting my mother reporting my absence, I'd show up for the first period attendance and then go home again.

Skipping the odd day would turn into days, and then into weeks. I was in mid-twelfth grade and pretty much stopped going. I felt too embarrassed to go back, and I just kept avoiding it.

One of my malfunctions, in this case not so beneficial, was withdrawing and avoiding a problem. Like I had learned to avoid my father, I could avoid the fear of consequences if I just made sure I completely avoided having to deal with a consequence.

I'd spend my days sleeping in, because I spent the evenings working and staying up late maintaining a BBS on my computer.

Bulletin board systems (BBS's) were how we communicated by computer before the internet. Except, without a large network of computers, you would use your computer to dial into one other computer, and none of them were talking amongst themselves but were islands unto themselves. It seems quaint and small now, looking back, but back then, the ability to reach out to any other computer outside your home was like science fiction and was awesome.

Those late nights also introduced me to university radio, in particular CKCU, the station of Carleton University in Ottawa. Like any university radio station, it was a pretty eclectic mix of stuff, but every once in a while, I'd get lucky and catch an anonymous DJ dropping some cutting-edge techno sounds. I'd have cassettes at the ready in my boom box to record the radio for listening later on. Those unknown DJs of that time had a direct connection to my own path as a DJ and to shaping future rave culture forever.

Finally, it came to a head. I don't know if a letter was sent home or it was a phone call, but my mother finally became wise to what was happening. She decided to present an ultimatum she felt would get me back to school.

"Christopher, you're either going to go to school or go to work, but you can't just sleep all day at home."

The choice was an easy one. I'd work at CompuFun and be an official high school dropout. This normally would be a life-ruining choice, but my beneficial malfunction was working for me.

From: Wesley
To: Anabolic Frolic

Before raving I was so incredibly depressed and suicidal. Then I started going to parties. I remember being at my first Hulla and having a moment on the dance floor when I felt happy for the first time in a very long time. That was a very pivotal point in my life. This was that moment in time for me.

(Posted on an online live recording)

chapter 4

GETTING FROM THERE TO HERE

It was 1993, and I was eighteen years old, now working at CompuFun full time. It was far more than a job, though; I was a "lifer" and felt I could get rich with this company. This first store I had started in had now grown to eight stores, but more importantly, they were planning on franchising. Video games had become a huge industry, and we were positioned as the only specialty store of that time.

Finally, the call came in. Jack Howard called me one night at home and asked if I'd be willing to move to Toronto and work at their head office as they started franchising.

"I'm not going to have any money to pay you at first," he said, "but trust me, you'll be able to buy your mom a house soon."

I didn't hesitate. I was in. This was going to be huge.

I had my car packed and ready for the road by 8 a.m. the next morning.

My mom was a little heartbroken and not ready for this move, not just yet anyways, but she knew I had to go. High school was history; I was ready for my real-world education.

The CompuFun head office at that time was in the warehouse area behind of one of its stores in the Toronto area—a couple of offices, a meeting room, and some warehouse space. I arrived at 1 p.m. that afternoon and met with Jack. I would be living with him at his house with some other CompuFun soldiers. Live, eat, breathe CompuFun, 24/7. I didn't realize it, but this was starting to become like a cult.

Jack put me to work immediately. One of the first tasks I had was to write an operations manual for the business. Seeing that I had more years' experience with the stores than anyone, despite my young age, this was a logical fit.

The hours became very difficult very quickly. We had impossible deadlines. Our franchise consultant had already started promoting the franchises, and leads were coming in. Before we knew it, stores were sold and training was coming up. These manuals and training systems had to be completed.

We were working on more than 24-hour days. Literally waking up, working till exhaustion, usually after 24 hours of work, sleeping for a while, then waking up to start it again. More bodies started joining us at the office, more recruits; most slept at the CompuFun house. Jack was our Dear Leader.

We all worked and played together. None of us were from Toronto; all were recruited from elsewhere in the CompuFun system. We were all working for the same goals—to get rich based on promises Jack had made to us. Working for slave wages and crazy hours.

I remember coming back to my bed, crashing, knowing I had to get up again in an hour to finish something else. I wondered if I could keep this schedule up or whether I had made a huge mistake and bitten off more than I could handle.

One thing that impeded progress, as I learned quickly, was that nearly everyone here was a pothead. They smoked dope all

day long. I observed that it seemed they couldn't even function without getting high first.

There definitely seemed to be a consensus that my innocence should be protected, so they made no effort to get me high with them. I was often referred to as "Little Chris," not to be corrupted like them. And after I observed their examples, I had no desire to join their pothead club. Drugs were completely off the table for me.

Before you knew it, literally after only a couple of months, some franchises had been sold, and the initial training would be starting. No one knew what they were doing. Here I was, an 18-year-old having to craft the systems for how our new franchises would operate. Few educated professionals were headhunted to fill positions in the organization; it seemed everyone had come in through osmosis or nepotism, thrust into new jobs and positions that were needed and learning as they went along. Collectively, we were a very young company. I was still the youngest working in the head office, but the median age was definitely in the early to mid-twenties.

I was sent to the opening of our first franchise store, in Newmarket, Ontario. We arrived with the counters, fixtures, and inventory to set up the new owner, Jerry. Jack called me and said I was to stay in Newmarket and that I'd be training Jerry. And just like that, I started my new position of store trainer.

Suddenly, I was living out of a suitcase, flying around the country, opening new stores. I was now nineteen years old and showing people pushing fifty how to run their new businesses. Before the year was up, I had opened a dozen stores.

CompuFun would go from 8 to 140 stores in only a year's time. I was still working towards the promise of getting rich, but now there were a lot of other people who were promised the world too.

One of my best friends from Ottawa, George, had earlier recommended I get it in writing. "Nah, it'll be fine," I told him. I honestly believed that. I see now, though, part of being young is needing to learn your own lessons.

Despite the fact that I was busting my hump being away from home for endless periods of time, I was paid a rather pitiful amount of money. A similar trainer doing the exact same job for another chain would have been making three or four times as much as me and be granted a per diem to cover road expenses, like food. I was paying my own way. But it didn't matter to me, because this company was on fire, and I'd get my payout eventually. Or so was the belief at the time.

A year into franchising, things were really flying, the company had grown huge, and we had new offices on the top floor of an office building, a big CompuFun sign at the top of the building, company cars for the top execs, and stories of lavish spending by Jack Howard and the inner boys club. The only problem with this picture was, I wasn't getting paid much more than an entry-level salary. Fine money for a twenty-year-old, but age had nothing to do with this. I was doing some high-end work, with tremendous responsibility, all the while having to invent the actual systems and processes as I did them.

Worse, though, was that CompuFun became a victim of the old rule of growing too fast. One bad month in January 1995, and the wheels ground to a halt. Paychecks weren't being met. Lots of rumours began to go around.

Jack asked me to lunch.

"Chris, as you're aware, things have been tough. We just need to get through this tough period. I know you're a good soldier and you're with me. That's why I need to lay you off. That will free up the salary, so we can continue. You can collect unemployment insurance during this period. I've got some big stuff brewing,

though, we'll get through this and we're all going to be rich, and I'll take care of you."

That was good enough for me. I honestly don't remember even flinching at this idea. I *was* a good soldier. Jack was always very persuasive. His excitement for his future vision was always intoxicating. It always had been, since the beginning.

But something was different this time. I had put eight years into this company, and now I was collecting unemployment insurance and working for free.

After about four months, I was told by the unemployment office to attend a workshop on getting a job. I spent four hours pretending I was looking for work.

I finally realized that this was madness. This was just like a cult, and I needed to get out.

I knew that the last thing I needed was to talk to Dear Leader Jack, so I withdrew quietly from the company. I just stopped showing up and didn't take anyone's calls looking for me. The situation was crazy—I was already laid off and collecting unemployment, yet I had to hide from them to stop coming into work.

One of my colleagues at CompuFun had bought an existing franchise at a local mall and asked if I'd be interested in managing it for her. I accepted. This would at least get me on my feet again while I figured out what to do with myself.

Being low on cash, I also needed a new place to live. The condo I was renting was no longer affordable.

I had the good fortune of becoming close with a CompuFun family that I worked with, and Denis and Marilyn Gregoire made an offer for me to rent a room from them in their home with their family. This was a good break, as I'm not sure what else I would have done. I might have moved back home, and this story could have ended there.

Living with the Gregoires wasn't just a financial help; it gave me the experience of seeing what a functional family can look like.

Denis and Marilyn had two children: a teenage son, Ian, and a daughter, Natasha, around my age. She had a fiancé named Mark.

I immediately did a "midnight move" from the condo, loading all of my possessions into a car. Denis helped me take my bed and sofa.

I settled into the Gregoires' den, which was converted into a bedroom for me, ready for the next chapter of my life to start.

From: Patrick
To: Anabolic Frolic

I love your style Frolic. You always seem to put a positive smile on my face and make me think of the great times I had with my friends. Your music is a sense of hope and your music keeps us happy hardcore kids happy. PEACE

(Posted on the Internet)

chapter 5

GOING TO MY FIRST RAVE

I had been interested in electronic music for much of my life, from the old breakdance electro days to early techno. I would often visit local music stores and comb over their electronic section and just buy random CDs, hoping to catch something I liked.

I had heard talk about "raves" in the early nineties, but pre-internet, and not knowing anyone who went to them, I had no idea where to find them. I knew I loved this music, and these raves sounded like a lot of fun.

A co-worker at CompuFun had attended some and had passed on crazy stories about illicit all-night parties happening in the middle of nowhere. Stories of taking buses to a farmer's barn, filled with lights and a sound system and people dancing. I wanted in, but I didn't know where.

I finally got my break when checking out a cheesy weekly dance show that was on in Canada at the time, called Electric Circus. Every Friday night, they would broadcast young people dancing in the City TV studios. Sort of like a low-rent version of American Bandstand.

In their concert and events section of the show, mixed in with upcoming concerts from Whitney Houston or De La Soul, they gave the info for an event by Pleasure Force, an early Toronto rave

company. Now I had a name, a date, and the all-important infoline telephone number. No one had websites then; you literally had to call a phone number and listen to a recorded message to find out more.

Location details were given by recorded message on the night of the event. I called it and wrote down the directions that would take us into the Toronto Port Lands. My best friend, George, was visiting me from Ottawa and was up for the adventure of going with me. He was five years older and had really loved the electro scene of the early eighties, and he was intrigued about raves ten years later.

He and I had connected through my BBS back in Ottawa some years earlier, both being Atari ST owners. Back then, you would become friends with someone just because they owned the same computer as you. We would have an enduring friendship that lasted even after I had left for Toronto.

It was so exciting, following my written directions to some underground party somewhere. We made a wrong turn into a deserted block—deserted except for a lone man standing in the middle of the sidewalk under an unlit street lamp, totally dark and shadowy.

"I don't know about this," said George, concerned.

Finally, we knew we were getting close; it seemed like thousands of cars were parked along the otherwise deserted streets. A security guard was spotted on a closed-off road that led to the party. We followed the parked cars, looking for a spot, finally parking some distance away across a bridge.

We got out, and it was dead quiet, except for crickets and night bugs in the grass around us. That, and the unmistakable sound of droning bass coming from some distance away.

"Holy shit, this is it," I thought to myself.

We walked in the direction of the bass and started to see multicolored light beams breaking overhead. More people joined us as we walked closer, finally approaching an industrial building. Security directed us towards the line.

Even though I was a fan of electronic music ("techno" as we called it then, as an umbrella term), I was still unclear what separated a rave from a nightclub that played dance music. Just what made this special?

We joined the line; it was really long. And it wasn't just long; it didn't seem to be moving. This was where I began to see the difference between a line at a rave and a line at a club. I began chatting with those around me; everyone seemed more open and friendly than in any line I had been in before. People were excited.

George remarked that this seemed bigger than his memories of electro. This was a big thing happening here.

I then got a taste of some of the entrepreneurship at a rave, when someone came along working the line, handing out $1 off coupons for his smart drink table inside the party.

I chatted some more with some young guys behind me; they had Russian accents.

"Hey, what are you on tonight?" they inquired.

Drugs. The reality was, I'd never tried any drug in my life. I came up with a clever answer.

"I'm high on life, man!"

They laughed. One introduced himself as Gordo.

I chatted with a group of girls in front of me, and one offered me a stick of gum. I started to see what made this unique. Anywhere else, these girls wouldn't have talked to me unless it was some sort of pickup situation, but here they were simply being nice, offering some gum and just being friendly.

The line ended up taking two hours to get in, but I had a blast waiting in it. Just taking it in—the people watching, the teasing

bass that was working its way from who knows where. It was truly fun. If a rave was this much fun in line, what was waiting for me inside?

I made it to the door, paid my $25 to get in, and stepped into basically a big gravelly yard. Some poster board was posted at the front with a list of what appeared to be two dozen DJs who'd be playing in the various stages until ten in the morning. A couple of tents were outside, one big, one small, and a large warehouse building was next to them.

The music was new to me. I had never heard techno so hard-hitting and so loud before—bass drones like I'd never experienced. I made my way to the warehouse entrance, which apparently held the main room.

Passing through the door was like walking into a sauna. Sweat dripped on me from the ceiling. This was a dark, dirty warehouse filled with thousands of people. At the front was the DJ, separated from the crowd by a chain-link fence. Wow. This was just like the movie *Road House*, with Patrick Swayze. Intelligent lights pierced through the steamy air, catching the moisture like laser beams.

My body shook from the bass coming from what appeared to be dozens of speakers and bass bins stacked to the roof. The bass was so powerful, I could feel my bones shaking. It was such a spectacle. I definitely had never seen anything like this before.

"This. Is. Awesome," I thought to myself.

The thumping bass, lights, throbbing music—it was easy to just start to dance. But I had never danced in my life, well, hardly ever. Working my teenage years away, I had skipped all of that; my experience at nightclubs with friends usually involved us hanging out and watching people. I just had to trust my body and let go.

I felt less self-conscious than if I was anywhere else. I just let my body get into it; I didn't have any moves, I just went with the music. After a while, I found my groove and let my energy level

rise. I was covered in sweat, dancing away without a care in the world.

A girl with dark hair wrapped as a crown around her head, wearing a Crystal Method t-shirt, passed by me, then turned her head.

"You're dancing up a storm!" she yelled at me. All I could respond with was a smile. "I want to give you this," she continued. She placed a bracelet around my wrist. It was made of blue beads, and there were four white letters on it: "PLUR."

"What is this?" I asked her.

"It means 'Peace, Love, Unity, Respect.'"

"Ahhhhhh," I responded. "Thank you!" And she gave me a hug and moved on. Later I would come to understand that PLUR was a tenet of raving, an ideal that a lot of ravers tried to uphold. It would become very influential for me later.

Some people around me had whistles and would toot along to the music. I thought that was awesome and made a mental note to get a whistle before my next rave.

I needed something to drink and decided to take a break. One of the vendors was selling iced tea in a bottle. I probably should have gone for some plain water instead, but I downed the whole bottle in one gulp, as I was dying of thirst. A minute later, I could feel my stomach turn from the onslaught of sugar.

Realizing I was in danger, I ran to the washroom, and luckily, a stall was open. I immediately threw up. Normally, I'd have been embarrassed, but I figured here, if anyone heard, they'd think I was just high. Sounds stupid, but that made me laugh.

Exiting the toilet, I realized this was not like any washroom I had been in before. It was filled with both women and men, lots just hanging out. I went to the sink to splash some water on my face and saw a familiar face near me. It was Gordo from the line.

"Hey! Did you take your pill yet?" he asked when he recognized me.

"No, man, I don't use drugs," I answered.

"Wow, you sure look happy," he said.

The reality was, I was happy. I was having an awesome time. I was hooked and couldn't get over the fact that something like this existed—from the music, volume, bass, and lights to the friendly people.

I was home.

I was exhausted, however, and decided to take a break outside. A secondary sound stage was set up out here, filled with hundreds of people. They were dancing on gravel, though, which didn't appeal to me much.

The smallest tent was the "chill-out" tent, with a video screen and some vendors. The smart drink guy was here, and also a table selling "herbal ecstasy." A bunch of people were sitting around on the floor, and George and I decided to take a break and sit down with them.

The video screen showed crazy, trippy patterns, and a raver started to dance in front of the video projector, creating a dancing silhouette on the screen.

The crowd was a mix of teens and early twenties. Most were dressed in the urban street clothes of that time, although some did stand out with their more colorful clothing and platform shoes.

The time was approaching 4 a.m., and I was exhausted. The party was going until 10 a.m., but there was no way I could stay any longer. I suppose if I had been chemically assisted, I could have stayed longer, but I wasn't and decided to call it a night.

As we left, several people stood outside, handing out flyers for other raves. Awesome! I was plugged in and would know what was coming up.

On our way back to the car, we saw some ravers hanging out outside.

"Hey, how's the party?" they asked.

"Pretty good," I answered.

"Really? Why are you leaving so early?"

"We're tired."

I was amazed that we were tired and leaving, and these guys hadn't even gone in yet. It was just a different world.

George and I made it back to my place and crashed until noon.

I had popped my rave cherry, and I wanted more.

From: Justin
To: Anabolic Frolic

Thank you, Anabolic, for putting out Happy 2b Hardcore! Happy hardcore just makes me wanna cry and dance at the same time.

My friend Kirsti introduced me to happy hardcore while I went to university and she helped saved my life at the time because the music just touched me in a way that made me want to keep on living.

Your music always helps keep my spirits up, up and away.

Much love and plur

(posted on the Internet)

chapter 6

RAVES CONTINUED

I started going to raves every weekend. I was pretty indiscriminate about which ones I went to; I knew none of the DJ names, nor did I have a preference yet for particular styles of music. Certainly the bigger spectacle events attracted me, and they happened on just about every weekend.

I started to see the same faces every weekend. We were usually all front and centre together. Despite the reputed drug use at raves, this posse of people I'd end up hanging out with were all drug-free, which was great by me. We'd dance up a storm up front together and didn't even know each other's names. We just acknowledged each other as we took our positions.

The internet was coming along, but it was mostly just email. No message board technology existed yet, so outside of a newsgroup like alt.rave, we didn't have much of a way to communicate.

One of the people in our regular group was a girl who called herself Slinky Gal. She wore a slinky wrapped around her arms and would dance with it. For energy she'd bring chocolate-covered coffee beans with her.

I'd hit one of the smart drink vendors for a $5 boost of energy. It was a mix of fruit juices and who knows what kind of high school chemistry energy chemicals.

After several weeks of attending raves, George and I made a trip to a seminal rave store in downtown Toronto, called X-Static. We were told they had the biggest collection of DJ mixtapes, and we wanted to expand our music collections to include the new sounds we'd been hearing lately.

Because none of this music was heard on the radio or had videos for MTV, it relied on some pretty low-tech ways to get exposure. One was to be played at a rave by a DJ, while another was as a recorded mixtape, where a DJ would have mixed the songs together. At the time, these were on audio cassettes, because CDs didn't yet have the technology to be burned or copied outside of a commercial pressing.

The music and artists were unknown to us. You would find DJs who played the kind of music you liked, and you'd stick with them. You wouldn't even know the names of the songs they played. The DJs were the rock stars of our scene.

Most of the music was created by anonymous artists in bedroom studios, usually overseas in England and Europe. Tracks were pressed to vinyl and would sell anywhere from a few hundred to a few thousand copies—a far cry from pop music, where sales were measured in hundreds of thousands or millions of copies sold.

X-static was located on the second floor of a ratty old building in downtown Toronto. The walls leading up the stairs seemed to be covered in graffiti, although upon closer inspection, they were actually filled with inscriptions from visiting DJs.

The shop itself was tiny, literally the size of a bedroom. They sold some clothing, tickets for upcoming raves, and what we had come there for—racks of mixtapes.

We scoured them over. I'm not sure what possessed me to check out the tapes called "happy hardcore" other than that I had been digging harder styles of techno lately. They had three tapes in that section, all recorded live in the UK: DJ Slipmatt, DJ Vibes, and DJ Druid. I bought all three.

It was love at first hearing. I became addicted to those tapes and would listen to them constantly. They weren't just DJ-mixed, they were recorded live at raves in England and with an MC overtop, working the crowd. This was awesome. A rave captured to tape. I wished I could be there.

The music itself was right up my alley, fast hard beats and percussion, flying at around 170 beats per minute (bpm), which was faster than most any other popular electronica. But in addition to the beats and speed, there was a counterbalance of "happiness" in the form of pianos, vocals, and songs written in uplifting major keys.

Vocals are actually unusual in most rave music, but this stuff was filled with them. They gave the songs a real hook and made them sound like real music. I couldn't stop listening.

I'd drive in my car listening to them at full blast. I just couldn't get over how much this music affected me. It was like a "Where have you been all of my life?" The beats, energy, and uplifting elements sent me soaring. Even when I went to bed at night, I'd put my headphones on and listen to my new happy hardcore tapes.

"Listening to happy hardcore while falling asleep is just weird," George would comment to me. He was probably right.

For the next year or so, our lives revolved around the rave. Every weekend was another party, another late night, and sleeping through the next day. My good fortune was that my shifts at work were in the evening, 1 p.m. to 9 p.m. Perfect for sleeping in.

My rave experience never involved drugs. I knew they were there, but the people I ran with weren't involved in them, and there was never any pressure or even any desire to do them. We were having an awesome time.

Truthfully, I was probably a little afraid to try them. I had gotten through my 21 years without so much as smoking a joint. I had really been turned off by the potheads at CompuFun, so this just didn't feel like something I wanted to get into.

From: Dave
To: Anabolic Frolic

Mr. Frolic,

I am just writing to thank you sooooo much for Hullabaloo. My first one was Funtopia, and I was also at Electric Dreams. Your parties are my promised land. Seriously, I have NEVER ever felt more complete on any occasion in my life.

Are you really truly aware of the massive amount of supreme joy that you have touched so many people with? Nothing compares to Hulla. It is the evolution of what raving was meant to be: thousands of people getting together and partying like it's the last one. You just cannot get that kind of vibe at any other type of party.

Your parties are more than just raves. They are one giant spiritual connection. I never found my true place in the rave scene until Hulla.

The 2–3 months between your parties are unbearably long. Can you tell me of any? All I listen to are your CDs. Is there a #3 in store for us? Please say yes. Oh well that's all for now. Please respond.

Thanx again

PLUR
(Sent by E-mail)

part two

SKILL SHOT

chapter 7

BECOMING A DJ

My love affair with this new style of music called happy hardcore was just beginning. I wanted more—but there was none. I had bought the only three tapes X-Static had, no CDs were sold in the stores, and there were no major DJs over here playing it. I wasn't going to give up, but there seemed to be only one solution—I would have to buy the vinyl records myself. The problem was that they only existed in the UK.

I took my search to the internet and alt.rave, a Usenet group. (Usenet groups were the earliest message boards of the internet.) I posted that I was looking for someone to buy me some records if I mailed the money over for them to do it. A "DJ Melody" responded to my post, and I sent him 50 pounds sterling (about $105 CDN at the time).

A week later, he updated me that he had my money and had bought some "blinders," British slang for something so great it will make you go blind. Awesome, I thought, I'm in business.

Now I needed a turntable. I didn't have money for the standard Technics 1200s, so I decided to hit the local pawn shops and see what I could find. A regular turntable wouldn't do; I needed one with pitch control, the ability to speed up or slow down a record so that its speed could match that of another record. This is the key to DJing and seamlessly mixing two records together.

As luck would have it, the pawn shop had one for $50 that would do the trick. Then I found a second one. A $100 mixer later, and I had a complete DJ set-up.

I had my turntables and set them up in the basement of the Gregoires' home, where their 16-year-old son, Ian, had his room. Ian would often accompany us to raves, and he was right into the idea of DJing in his room.

I had the turntables; now all I needed was the records. I waited and waited. DJ Melody stopped responding to my emails. After a month, I realized I had been ripped off.

I could have given up; it was a real pain in the ass to try and source these records from the UK. But I decided to give it another shot. I posted again on alt.rave and found another Brit to help me out; this guy was called DJ Damage.

I sent him 50 pounds as well, and a week later, he reported that he had bought my records and had mailed them back already! I was excited now. I immediately sent him more money, 100 pounds this time, for more records.

Before long, I had piles of vinyl showing up for me. I kept sending Damage more and more money. He cleared out the local shop and took the train to the famous Slammin' Vinyl store in London and made a huge dent there. I couldn't get enough.

During the day, I worked at and managed a CompuFun store, but I lived for the weekends when we'd hit the latest and greatest raves, and I started to teach myself how to DJ in the basement of the house I lived in.

I didn't really have dreams of being a big-name DJ; I just wanted to play the music that I was passionately in love with. I didn't know any other DJs, so I was left on my own to figure out how to make this work. If there had been a readily available supply on CD or tape, I'm not sure if I would have ended up pursuing this route.

At its most basic level, mixing two records together involves matching the speed of record A with that of record B, so that the beats can be layered over one another and it sounds like one continuous record. Now, if the two records are written at different speeds, for example, record A is 170 bpm and record B is 160 bpm, record B is going to have to be sped up (or pitched up) to get it to 170 bpm. This is why all DJ turntables need the pitch adjuster.

Generally, while record A is playing, the DJ will listen to record B in his headphones and begin to pitch it up to where they both are playing at the same speed. Once you've accomplished that, you can start the mix by cueing up the first beat of record B and letting it go at the appropriate time.

If you do this all correctly, record B will slowly build and take over, while record A fades away. Maintaining a flow of energy is very important to a rave DJ attempting to keep hundreds or thousands of people moving together.

All DJ records are designed to be mixed in this fashion, and they feature DJ-friendly intros and "outros" where the layers of the instruments build up or fall away.

This has been the standard way of mixing two records going back to the innovation of the 12" DJ vinyl during the disco era of the 1970s.

Teaching yourself how to mix and beat match can take a long time. It's no different from learning how to play any musical instrument; the more time you put into it, the better you'll get. Someone can play a guitar after six months, but they don't have anything on a professional who's been at it for decades. DJing is the exact same thing.

There's also the additional challenge for a DJ of building their record collection and defining their style, and all of that takes time

as well, even though the basics of beat matching can be learned quickly.

I started to make mixtapes for my own listening and to give to my friends as I honed my skills. All I needed was a DJ name.

I really wanted to go with something more unique than "DJ Chris." I wanted a name that represented me, my style, and my music, a name that people would remember. I then received inspiration. A year earlier, I had been visiting some friends, who had offered me an herbal tea flavour that I remembered as Anabolic Frolic. It immediately stuck with me. Frolic—having fun. Anabolic—making people work out through dance. I liked it. I got some positive feedback from my friends and settled on it. Anabolic Frolic was born.

During this time, the internet and the World Wide Web were really coming on strong. I decided to set up a web page promoting my music. "Anabolic Frolic's Happy Hardcore Headquarters" went online early in 1996 and was one of the first pages dedicated to happy hardcore. Yahoo! even created a new happy hardcore category in their electronica section, with my site being the only one for some time.

The page was pretty standard by mid-1990s standards, but it featured record reviews by me (and later guest DJs), descriptions of the music, a bio, a guestbook, and contact details for me. Technology at that time didn't allow for any online audio, so the site was purely text and some pictures.

Being the only game in town at that particular time meant I started to get a lot of visitors. It's weird to think back to then, but not everyone and their dog had a web page; it was actually uncommon, and it cost you money to have one. So by default, I became "the guy" people came to, to inquire about this new music. In particular, I was approached by new American fans and DJs who were catching on to this music.

Everyone wanted to know where I was getting my records from. I had my guy overseas, but the entrepreneur in me saw an opportunity. I began to look at the record labels and see phone numbers for distributors in the UK. I started to make calls, and overnight I was hooked up with three of the biggest distributors of happy hardcore vinyl in the UK. I could buy the records at wholesale costs and start importing them for resale here.

I called my new record business Nokturnal Records and piggy-backed it to my Anabolic Frolic website. All my visitors were now told they had a source for their vinyl. Virtually overnight, I went from an unknown DJ playing unknown music to the top of the food chain of an emerging scene.

The internet and e-commerce still hadn't come of age, so I improvised and processed credit card orders by calling the charges in to a friend's CompuFun store. He would charge the customer on his machine and send me a cheque for the payment. Customers would call me, and I'd play them the latest records I'd received over the phone. They picked the ones they liked, and I'd send their orders out with UPS. The entire business was run from my bedroom at this time, my inventory sitting in a milk crate. This was really low-tech.

Even with all this activity on the internet and with record sales, my DJ career hadn't yet gone anywhere. Well, actually, it had gone nowhere. I didn't even know where to begin to start to get gigs. But my website led people to believe I was a much bigger name than I was, and suddenly I got an inquiry to play at a rave in Buffalo, New York.

My first ever DJ booking, and it was to be a headliner! I couldn't believe it. I accepted, but I was scared to death. I began to practise furiously and even rented some Technics 1200s, so I could get a feel for playing on "real" turntables.

In those days before digital mixing, it was just two spinning discs that you physically sped up or slowed down. Beyond the beat matching, I began to learn to match the phrasing of the songs, the chunks that would overlap properly. Beat matching means avoiding the "train wreck" of colliding beats, but building on the phrasing of the songs meant building a "flow." This allows the listener or dance floor to keep the momentum going without even having heard the song before.

In the Gregoires' basement, I'd practise all day, every day, mixing different songs, mixing them at different times, and recording them to audio cassette. I'd listen to the cassettes when I wasn't practising, to hear what worked, but more importantly, what *felt* right.

There was something instinctive inside me that was looking for a feeling. Any person or computer can beat match two beats, but can they make it more than that? The best analogy I can make is between someone just playing notes on the piano and someone really performing that song. They are both doing the same thing, technically—playing the notes of the song. But one of those performances transcends, and the other doesn't.

Without consciously understanding what I was doing at the time, I was unconsciously tapping into that deeper state with my music.

I also suspect I just had a good ear for it. Listening to the recordings, I knew what I liked and I knew what sounded good. In later years, I'd be given all sorts of demo tapes from aspiring DJs, and I was often shocked at the poor quality they were handing over for me to listen to. They were missing something if they thought these tapes were a good demo of their abilities and were looking for work. I'm not even sure I could teach it, but I knew it and felt it.

One of the other things I found during my practising was that I would become bored repeating the same mixes, so I would challenge myself always to mix different records in different ways. It was a thrill to hear how two new songs might sound together. Later, as I became a bigger DJ, I believe my sets stood out because they were never the same. I avoided doing the same mixes; each of my sets was always going to be a new experience. Some other DJs would mix the same songs in the exact same order all the time, because they knew this mix sounded good. But I never did that. I preferred the risk of creating something new. Creating something between me and the crowd that had never been done before.

In later years, I would recognize this as a "flow state." I was creating a flow, starting with the fact that it was completely improvised, with no idea where it was going to go, what record I would play next, making a decision at the precise moment it had to be made.

At that time, there were probably about forty happy hardcore vinyl releases a month, and it would take a good ear to separate the songs. I found I had a good ability to identify big tracks before they became big, putting me ahead of the curve.

There's a saying about promoting your strengths and hiding your weaknesses. In this case, my weakness was the little real-world gigging I had done. My strength was that I had completely dedicated myself to this new music in ways few ever do. It was a full-time pursuit, establishing myself as the go-to guy for records, turning this into a full-time business. Happy Hardcore was already my life.

I had learned to be a hard worker at CompuFun. Now I was putting that energy into a new passion.

I promoted the appearance on my website, and the date arrived before I knew it. I took Ian Gregoire with me (then sixteen years old) and we drove the two hours to the venue. It was a rundown

old warehouse in a really crummy section of Buffalo. The security was some sort of mishmash of punk rockers with mohawks.

Before long, lots of colorful ravers started to arrive.

Minutes before my set, a promoter was yelling, telling everyone "Happy hardcore upstairs in ten minutes!" It was showtime.

I arrived a few minutes before my set, and the DJ before me was complaining that the monitors weren't working. In my inexperience, I didn't even know what monitors were! They're the speakers facing the DJ that let them hear the music properly, instead of catching an echo of what the crowd is hearing. My entire DJ experience up until this point had been in the basement in my house, with a home stereo system as my speakers. I had no concept of DJ monitors. To not look like a boob, I cursed with the other DJ about this technical issue.

His last record was on, and it was time for me to start up. I pulled my first record from its sleeve and laid it on the deck. In my headphone, I listened for my first beat. I was cued up and ready for showtime.

The previous DJ's final beats of his record played out, and I hit the start button on my turntable, and oh my god, something was terribly wrong!

The beats were going like crazy—something sounded terrible—was it at the wrong speed? What the hell was going on? I had no idea. But finally, I realized the value of loud monitors facing the DJ. Since I had none, the only thing I heard was the ricocheting beats of the main speakers aimed at the crowd and into this cavernous warehouse space and then bouncing through the venue and then back at me. It sounded like a machine gun.

I am fucked. I don't know what to do with this! I'm two minutes into my sixty-minute set, and I have no idea what I'm doing! I'm a fake, and they're all going to realize it. I never wanted an hour to be

over so quickly in my life. It was time to mix the first record, and it was ugly. I cut my losses and quickly cross-faded over.

After a few mixes, though, I found myself catching my breath. People were dancing, and I even started to enjoy myself. I had plenty of wicked tracks with me—after all, my record collection was one of a kind. No one had these records but me. Then the sixty minutes was over, and I was relieved. I had gotten through my first set alive.

Afterwards, people approached me about how much they enjoyed it. I wondered if they were being kind, or maybe they hadn't noticed as much. Even twenty years later, someone posted on my website about seeing me at this event.

I was able to enjoy the rest of my time at the rave in the DJ chill room. I got paid. I was officially a professional. We headed for home before it got too late. Anabolic Frolic, headlining DJ, was a thing.

From: Paul
To: Anabolic Frolic

Hey,

I guess you must get a lot of mail from Ravers gushing about how amazing a DJ you are and what a great thing Hullabaloo is to so many people's lives. I'm an old man and not prone to gushing :). I will say this.

A man who moves through life more awake than asleep must examine his actions and the ways in which he has affected his world. The music you have played has lifted the hearts and minds of thousands of people. The message of PLUR is expressed by so many people who encounter it at Hullabaloo.

Do you believe in Karma?

Sincerely,

In Peace Love Unity and Respect

(Sent by email)

chapter 8

1996

The summer of 1996, I was at a crossroads. I felt I was really on to something, but what? Was there a real career here for me? What could possibly come from this besides a good time? Culturally and musically, I felt that we, my generation, were ready for something new.

The early 1990s were dominated by the new grunge sound, and there was a severe economic recession and the mood was dark. But as the nineties went on, I felt like my generation were coming into their own and were ready for some positivity. Why couldn't happy hardcore and the rave scene be that conduit?

It was never going to succeed if no one knew it existed, however, and I decided it was on me to get this new happy hardcore sound heard.

I came up with the concept of a "major release" mixtape. It would have the appearance of being bigger than it was. I called it "The Frolic Files—Happy Hardcore level 1," and I designed an "X-Files" inspired jacket cover of an alien autopsy, but the alien had headphones on and a smile on its face.

The inside liner notes featured an article about me from "*Nemesis Magazine*." The reality was that there was no such thing; *Nemesis Magazine* never existed. The article was written by a friend, Lachlan, who profiled me and my new happy hardcore sound.

To save costs, I duplicated all the tapes myself on a double cassette deck. What that meant was that every thirty minutes, a side of the cassette would be finished, and then I'd flip the tape or switch in a new one and start copying again. I'd do this morning to night, often switching tapes from my bed while I slept, if I woke up for a moment.

I photocopied and cut the jacket covers, created labels, and put it all together.

The next step was where my plan went into high gear. I was going to give these tapes away to everyone I could. This was not about convincing a promoter to hire me; this was about creating a new market for a new kind of music.

I put out an offer on the internet that I would mail a tape to anyone who asked—at my own expense!

Every rave I attended, I brought two boxes with two dozen tapes and would hand them out to people on the dance floor who looked like they were having a good time.

Over the next couple of months, I mailed hundreds of tapes away. Some thought I was being foolish, and maybe I was, but I saw no other way to create a market without doing it guerilla-style like this.

All day, every day, I had my tape player duplicating cassettes, one at a time. Then I'd mail or hand them out.

Nowadays, it's easy to put a digital mix online free for the masses, and just before that, to duplicate CDs; these things are truly a dime a dozen now. But back then, this was a serious undertaking, both expense-wise and logistically. No one had tried this before, and it made me stand out.

I might still have next to no DJ appearances, but people were going to know who Anabolic Frolic was.

I was 21 years old. Young enough that in theory, I could burn away a couple of years to pursue this. I decided that was what I

wanted. I wanted to live with no regrets. I didn't ever want to wonder "What if?" It was time to take the next step.

Looking back, I see that this was a clear thought in my head at the time.

I was starting to make money with Nokturnal Records, and I decided I should spend more time working on this business. I resigned as manager of the CompuFun store, which would be the last regular job I'd ever have in my life. All told, I had had eight years with CompuFun, essentially an apprentice education in business. I am grateful for that now, and it certainly laid a foundation for me to take these next steps.

I also needed something bigger and better than the bedroom I rented from the Gregoires. And at the same time, they were going to leave that house, so it was time for me to move on.

My uncle Yuri, who lived in Toronto as a music and sound editor for TV and movies, had an idea. He was going to move out of his office space in the studio building he occupied, to a bigger space. Why didn't I move in there, set up Nokturnal Records in there, and if I had to, even sleep there?

I would have to sleep there, since I'd never be able to afford rent for an apartment at this time.

Yuri said, "No one has to know your underwear and blanket are hidden out of sight." The building also had a shower, if I needed it. I could make it there.

I decided to go for it. On October 1, 1996, my twenty-second birthday, I moved into a 10' by 12' studio room. It had no windows in it. As a birthday/moving in present, Yuri had his carpenter build some shelves and a DJ table for my new store. And we went to Home Depot and found some plastic door liners that would make perfect shelves for my records to display on the wall.

I had a couch and chair from before as well as a computer desk. So Nokturnal Records had its own shop now. This was real.

I was operating a bona fide internet ecommerce store that specialized in happy hardcore vinyl.

That first night, however, was tough.

I turned the lights off, to immediate and complete darkness in this windowless room. I felt my way over to my couch, like a blind person. I crawled onto the sofa and pulled my blanket over me.

I then felt very alone—the only time in my life I had felt like this.

Was I doing the right thing? I was trying to promote a new kind of music to people who didn't even know it existed. I had no idea.

From: Guy
To: Anabolic Frolic

Hey there,

My name is Guy. I was at the party you played (little one in the skate park) on New Year's. I want to thank you. I had the best time I've had in a very, very long time, and I attribute it mostly to your set.

When I was younger (pre 1990ish) I had a pretty rough time with drugs. I avoided raves for a long time because it was hard for me to get into the scene. The first rave that I did go was really neat, but I felt a little like an outsider. I have been to a bunch of parties since then, and it's remained the same, neat, but feeling a little like an outsider.

That changed during your set on New Year's. I felt a part of it all. I feel kind of odd saying this, but I really had a fabulous time.

Thanks again,

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 9

TO BE SUCCESSFUL YOU MUST PROJECT SUCCESS

That's a saying I've heard, and I took it to heart when I moved into my new office. No one needed to know I was basically starving. All they knew was that I was a big name in an emerging market, top of the food chain, someone who all the other DJs had to see to get their vinyl from. I still wasn't getting booked, because promoters didn't know what to do with or how to include a happy hardcore set with the standard music heard at raves in North America at that time—trance, house, jungle, and techno.

But the community that was into happy hardcore online was growing, and people were buying the records I was importing. I made just enough to get by—and by "get by," I mean that I paid the rent for my little office, and I could microwave some soup. But there was something in the air, you could feel the momentum, and I knew I had to see this through.

I had only been in my new office for a couple of weeks when the phone rang.

"Hi, is this Chris?"

"Yes."

"Chris, this is Steve Levy from Moonshine Music. We got your tape and love it. We've been thinking of doing a happy hardcore album. Would you be interested in compiling and mixing it for us?"

At the time, Moonshine Music was the biggest producer of electronic music compilations in the United States and possibly the world. I had sent them a Frolic Files tape as part of my shotgun promotional campaign, but I didn't dream anything might come of it. But nothing ventured, nothing gained, right?

I couldn't believe that they were now on the phone with me. And not just on the phone with me, but offering me a deal.

I did my best to play it cool.

"Yeah, I think that's something I could be interested in."

"We have the Speed Limit series already, which this would be replacing. Those sell around 10,000 units, so we're hoping for the same. We'll offer you $1000 and a trip to Los Angeles."

"OK, sounds good," I responded, still trying to keep my cool.

"OK, then, we'll prepare an agreement; in the meantime, get us a list of all the tracks you want and the contact info for the labels, so we can license them."

"I can do that."

"Great, here's my cell number; give me a call next week. Looking forward to it, Chris."

"Me too, great speaking with you, Steve."

And in less than one minute, I had a deal. Not just any deal, but a deal with the biggest company of its kind. The kind of deal only the biggest DJ names had previously made. I leapt around my office, then skipped down the hall to tell my uncle in his new office.

A fax came in a day later with the contract. I signed it and sent it back. Done like dinner.

In the history of Moonshine Music, they had never signed a deal with an unknown talent like myself, nor would they ever do

so again. I just happened to be in the right place at the right time, doing the right things. My roll of the dice was starting to pay off.

A week later, Steve Levy called me again.

"Hey Chris, we need that recording from you ASAP, we have to move on this."

What? They needed a recording already? I hadn't even sent them the track listing yet. They didn't even know what was going to be on there. I couldn't believe the trust and faith they were putting in me.

Though the fact is that when I sent my Frolic Files tapes out, whatever I was lacking in actual gigs, it was clear that my ear and technique were excellent, and that's what Moonshine was looking for. The tapes were so impressive that they gave Moonshine the confidence to greenlight me and not even oversee my work. The work transcended to another level beyond just mixing songs.

As much as some fortunate timing had to do with my getting the Happy2bHardcore record deal, in the end, that only meant getting my foot in the door. My cumulative skills, ear, and dedication to the music created a final product that sold. Someone else would have been happy to fill my spot as the DJ, if I was unable to actually deliver. Faking till you make it only gets you so far—at some point, you have to do the job, and my journey, practice, toiling, suffering, and service to the music was starting to pay off.

I picked the 16 tracks that would make it onto the album according to what was hot at the time for me, my web fans, and the community. Happy hardcore as a style of music was also going through great changes during that time, and I wanted the album to represent the new wave. There would be no old-school, but instead, full-on tunes that were lighting up dance floors overseas. That, combined with the soaring vocals I loved and uplifting elements that made the music so happy. This was the dawn of a new era, and I wanted to be part of the vanguard.

Compiling a DJ-mixed album has a few steps. First, you start with picking the songs you like that you'd like to see on there. Next, you start determining an order and flow for the album. There has to be a flow of energy and a build; these can't just be random tracks played like songs on a jukebox. The final product will be heard and judged as a continuous 70-minute piece.

I sent Moonshine a list of 20 candidate tracks that I could use, just in case there were some problems, and sure enough, there were, though not with the song choices. But these little record labels overseas were so small, the phone number on the record label would often just be someone's cellphone. It might very well be unreachable now, or the phone might no longer be in service. Some of the tracks I liked didn't make the cut for that reason, and unfortunately, those artists missed out on a payday because of it.

I had my final sixteen; it was time to create the mix. I spent days playing with the records, figuring out the best order. I also had to decide what speed this album was going to be. DJ records are often played somewhat sped up, but in this case, we were potentially exposing a new style of music to a whole new American market. This stuff would be way faster than anything anyone had heard previously. For that reason, I decided it would be best to leave the tracks at zero, or not pitched up at all, a flat 170 beats per minute, the speed they were written at. The exception would be that towards the end of the album, I'd creep it up to 175 bpm as it built up.

For an opening track, I wanted to throw in something different, something that showed this was a new style of music. I picked the squealing guitars and vocals that kicked off "Reach Out" from an artist called Eruption.

So now that I had my track listing and had determined the order, it was time to capture it to a master tape.

With my uncle's studio down the hall, I was lucky to have access to professional recording gear. He was able to give me some calibrated audio levels and a meter to keep an eye on.

Now, back in 1996, the state-of-the-art with capturing a DJ mix was very simple. Two turntables fed into a mixer, and that mixer fed to the digital tape recorder and your speakers for listening. You had one take to get it right, and if something went wrong, you had to start all over again.

The software I've seen today that bedroom DJs now have access to is astonishing. I don't think, unless they were around back then, that anyone would understand how primitive this process was in 1996 and how potentially time-consuming.

It did help to plan your mix out for these situations. So I had everything laid out, and it was just a matter of doing it.

I spent about two whole days recording take after take, sometimes having to abort and try again. Sometimes it sounded OK, but I still didn't like something. But finally, I had some release candidates that I listened to, and I picked the best one.

I listened to the final mix for another couple of days, then sent it via FedEx to West Hollywood where Moonshine Music was based. The first Happy2bHardcore was done.

I finished the album at the end of October, and it was now in the system, where Moonshine prepped for a scheduled Feb 1, 1997 release.

The name Happy2bHardcore had been conceived by Steve Levy, as was the iconic smiley face artwork, designed in-house at Moonshine.

I had a big CD release coming; now all I needed was some more gigs. The irony of all of this!

The phone rang again in my office at the end of October. The caller was a promoter who had received my Frolic Files tape. They included a bunch of ravers planning a charity rave, called Not The

End, for the end of November. They loved my tape. I was in. This would be my first show in my home of Toronto.

I really wanted this gig to go well, and part of that would be giving a "UK-style" hardcore set that included the use of an MC.

MCs were integral to UK rave culture, almost like cheerleaders onstage between the crowd and the DJ, working the crowd. Outside of the jungle scene, they were not seen in North America, and the jungle version was more about rapping over the drum and bass beats. A hardcore MC had rhymes but was there more to orchestrate the energy level of the crowd with the uplifting happy hardcore songs.

I needed an MC.

Problem was, just as a good MC can really help your set, a bad or inexperienced MC could really annoy the crowd and destroy what you're trying to do with the music. I did have one candidate, though.

I had met a young British immigrant MC named E-by-gum (real name John Smith) at some recent raves and was impressed with his style. The term "e-by-gum" actually has nothing to do with ecstasy, but it's a colloquialism from England, sort of loosely meaning shock or awe. I found his number and gave him a ring and invited him to be part of my set. John agreed. We would be partners throughout my boom period, and I'd seldom perform without him.

The night of Not The End rolled around, and I felt more mature and confident as a DJ. I damn well better have—I was a signed DJ with an international release coming up in a couple of months!

So it was time for me to start my set. Another local DJ whom I had become friends with, DJ Frisky, came out to support me and stood nearby.

It's an interesting experience to play new music for a new crowd when they have no idea what is coming. In later years, I would be the draw and attraction, but back then, happy hardcore was so unknown. But once those first hard beats kicked in, the crowd just went with it. I had them dancing. I could feel the energy in the room; it was a full house. E-by-gum did his job and got them screaming and making noise. With him at my side, the Anabolic Frolic that future generations would get to know was starting to shine.

I received the ultimate compliment when the crowd responded so strongly to my last track that E-by-Gum ordered a "rewind"—to stop the track and start it again from the top.

They ate it up. And then it was over. I felt good. My DJ career was starting to pick up steam.

From: kOko
To: Anabolic Frolic

I just wanted to say that your Happy2bHardcore is fabulous!!!!

I love it. Living in Green Bay Wisconsin, there aren't any happy raves around here, moreover, barely anyone around knows what happy hardcore even is... but it's great to know where I can always go whenever I want to be boosted up into the sky with a complete fulfillment of ecstasy-happiness.

In fact, I am listening to one right now. So, again, thank you for the wonderful music.

Sincerely,

:)

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 10

HAPPY2BHARDCORE BUILDS

With the upcoming Happy2bHardcore release, I was scheduled for a trip to Los Angeles for the release and some promotion. I had been in contact with an LA-based rave promoter, and we worked out a deal to have a CD release party that weekend. I was also able to negotiate E-by-gum attending with me.

I travelled with George to LA via Vancouver. We booked a week as a holiday to take in the sights and have some fun leading up to the party. While in Vancouver, I stopped by a large Virgin Music store. I did my usual routine, which was to check out the Electronica section, but this time I was struck by something. An eye-catching day-glo CD case with bright yellow smiley faces on it was in the section. My CD was already hitting stores. Here it was. There was something very surreal about this.

After travelling to LA and checking into a hotel Moonshine had booked for me, we rolled into Moonshine on the first day there. I got to meet the owners, Steve and his brother Jon, and all their staff, which probably numbered about twenty. I then got a taste of the promotional power they were going to put behind my

new CD: movie-sized posters (which they had me sign a bunch of), a professional photo shoot, magazine ads, print interviews, radio interviews, and distribution in every major store and chain.

George turned to me and said, "Chris, I will always remember you when."

It was hard to deny that this was big.

There was one small problem, though; I felt like I didn't belong here. Yeah, I'd devoted and dedicated myself 100% to making it, but I had gotten here in a very unconventional way. Luck seemed to be a big factor, or it felt like it to me. I realize as I write this and put my story together that no matter how little onstage seasoning I had had at that point, there was no one else on this side of the Atlantic who could say they made their living from happy hardcore music. I was top of the heap by default.

Funnily enough, the first review of the CD arrived by fax while I was there—and it was terrible. It even made fun of my name; "Anabolic Frolic—uh, whatever," said the reviewer. I took that in stride, though, and it makes me smile now.

The CD release rave was scheduled for Saturday night, and we had a few days to enjoy LA—my first time there. I actually got to watch my first sunset on that trip, with George on Venice beach, watching the sun setting into the ocean.

I was scheduled to appear on Groove 103 FM, the big dance radio station in LA at the time. I was particularly nervous about this. It didn't matter how many hours I had at home or that this was my full-time gig, the reality was that I had very little experience playing out. I was scheduled for a 9 p.m. appearance, and we listened to the radio hours earlier, as they promoted me.

"We have North America's premiere happy hardcore DJ, Anabolic Frolic, he's going to be in the studio tonight, so be sure to check that out!"

My stomach did somersaults. This big LA radio station was talking about me? I wondered what would happen if I didn't show up. I could barely stand it.

I didn't eat that night, but there was no backing out. I packed my record bag, and we went to the studio.

We arrived at the station, which was located in a tall downtown LA office building. Out to greet us were station staff and the VP of marketing from Moonshine. This was like VIP treatment, as we got whisked into the studio. I'd play a live mix and then do an on-air interview.

It was time for me to mix on the radio and a funny thing happened—my nerves went away. Even better, I was in the zone! For all my worry, I nailed it. I wrapped it up and went in for my studio interview with a big smile on my face, singing along with my last track, which was still playing.

We talked a little about how I had gotten into this, and we promoted the party. They gave away some CDs to listeners—one was in Compton, I recall—and that was it. I was on top of the world.

The CD release party rave ended up being a sellout. I was on to something; there was definitely an audience for my music. I just wasn't sure how far it would go.

Happy2bHardcore hit the stores and was a smash hit, actually selling out of its entire first run. Moonshine ran with the ball and promoted it everywhere. The first CD would go on to sell over 100,000 copies by itself, a huge number for an electronic music album and ten times Moonshine's sales goals. That was all fine and good, but remember, I was only paid a grand, so I was still left sleeping on the floor of my office, even though my profile had risen dramatically.

But I started receiving feedback from ravers from all over. They felt heard. This music was touching them in profound and

deep ways. In fact, some of their words are found throughout this book. I could feel the connection, and it was making me feel like my decisions were worth it. Their words would embolden me for the future.

I was getting more bookings now, but I was still young, naive, and inexperienced, and I was dealing with inexperienced rave promoters who were also not money-driven. I had no agent or manager—just me—and I didn't know how to take this to another level and make proper money. Often I would take what was offered, and the offers all involved a plane ride. My beneficial malfunction of never asking for help wasn't serving me at this moment.

And I still wasn't working in my hometown of Toronto.

I hadn't yet put all the pieces together for a profitable DJ career. Besides the money I got paid for the CD, and maybe a DJ appearance a month, and maybe selling 100 pieces of vinyl a month, there wasn't much of a career here. And it seemed most promoters still didn't know how to fit my music into their events. I'd have to take matters into my own hands.

From: Ashley
To: Anabolic Frolic

You have changed my life and given me hope. Thanks for the inspiration. Keep On Man

(Posted on the Internet)

part three

MULTI-BALL

chapter 11

HULLABALOO! IS BORN

The year 1997 was a crossroads for the rave scene in North America. Raves had existed in various cities for about five years, and the first generation had come and gone, but there seemed to be some negativity in the wind. The "rave" music of the UK (of which happy hardcore was a descendent) was overshadowed in North America by other forms of electronic music and a chain of events that were about dark spaces, with no lights or with strobes only.

I felt an absolute dearth of raves with the uplifting party attitude I wanted to experience myself. I also felt there was a large untapped market for happy hardcore music that existing promoters weren't feeding.

Mostly, I wanted to see the kind of events that I knew existed in the UK, defining raves like Dreamscape and Helter Skelter. Ones that featured my kind of music, crowds, attitude, and energy—the ones I heard on those bootleg mixtapes. It was obvious no one was going to do this here, so I had to do something myself.

I wanted a name that stood out, again inspired by the raves overseas that I would read about in imported magazines of the time, names like Dream and Eternity. I brainstormed names for some time with everyone I knew, and one jumped out at me from a list provided by DJ Frisky—the word "hullabaloo."

One dictionary defines "Hullabaloo" like this:

hullabaloo/*Noun*

pl **-loos** a loud confused noise or commotion [*hallo* + Scots *baloo* lullaby]

Just like Anabolic Frolic, I had a name that meant something. I added the exclamation at the end for good measure. But there had already been a small handful of happy hardcore events in Toronto, including one run by a UK company, United Dance, that ran wildly popular happy hardcore events in the UK. None of those events had been financially successful here. How was I going to succeed where all others had failed?

The first thing I did was invoke a classic old-school rave vibe from top to bottom. We might have been playing new music, but there was no question that happy hardcore was the direct descendent of the original rave sound.

An online fan who was a graphic designer, Gary, offered to help me out. He found an image of a little fairy girl that we used for the flyer.

The flyer was also a very large one for a small party. Normally, smaller events are money-conscious and spend little. But I wanted a flyer that would make an impression—and it did.

For a venue, I utilized a basement of a meat packing factory that was operating on Friday nights as a rave club called the E! Network. It was run by three of my rave friends, DJ SOS, DJ JoE.P, and Janine. Having an affordable, friendly venue to use for my first event was key. The rent came with their in-house sound system, which gave me one less thing to have to put together.

We rented extra lighting and moved things around from the regular set-up to keep things interesting.

Now I just had to pick a date. I chose one six weeks out, June 21, 1997. Nothing else had been announced on that date to compete with me, so I felt it was a safe bet.

There was one little problem—I had no money to invest. This was going to have to be done with an extremely modest budget, and I still needed DJs. I rounded up all the local happy hardcore DJs we had at the time who I knew personally. I also recruited some regulars who played for the E! Network. To round things out, I brought in a Toronto jungle legend, Marcus Visionary, to tie into our theme of UK-descended rave music. He also hosted a weekly radio show that I hoped would help our promotion.

I also felt I needed some kind of headliner. I had some contacts overseas and got hold of DJ Hixxy, at the time an emerging force in the hardcore scene. He had a very popular record label called Essential Platinum, some hit records, and a new CD series of his own, called Bonkers. He wasn't a household name over here yet, but he was willing to come over for basically airfare and a hotel and the opportunity to promote himself and his music in Canada.

When designing the flyer, I pulled in some tricks I learned from seeing UK flyers, adding in a hype-inducing statement at the bottom that said, "This is the one you've been waiting for!"

The party was called Something Good, as suggested by my graphic artist; this had been the title of an early 90s electronica song by a band called Utah Saints. It sounded good to me, so I went with it.

In 1997, the internet was still coming of age, and Hullabaloo became one of the first "internet parties." A lot of DJ talent came from the internet, and we had a lot of support from places like #rave, which was a popular channel on IRC (the early form of chat rooms) at that time.

So that was it. We had all the elements, I felt, for a successful event—if only the ravers would come.

Then we got hit with our first bit of bad news. My date of June 21 wasn't as free as I'd thought; the biggest promoters in town at

that time, Better Days UK, were throwing an event on that date. Worse, though, the name of their event was "All Good."

A weird coincidence, I'm sure, but talk about some misfortune! The worst part about all this was that Better Days had proven themselves a juggernaut—no promoter had successfully thrown a party against them. And here I was with my modest little party with a new style of music.

There was some good news though. My flyer was a hit, and my event was also resonating with ravers who didn't particularly like events like Better Days.

Ticket outlets were reporting some sales, and I felt good, but the problem was, I needed pretty much to fill the 500-person capacity of the venue if I was to break even.

The weekend of the first Hullabaloo approached. I started what would become a Hullabaloo tradition by buying 500 whistles to give away to everyone on their way in. Those whistles would become a trademark of our events, and we would hand them out at every event we would ever have.

Two of my cousins, Phil and Dave, came from Ottawa on the day of the event to help me out and work the door.

All I needed to do now was go to the airport to pick up Hixxy. I swung by the hotel I had booked for him and paid for the room, then went to the airport for his noon arrival.

The only problem was that he wasn't there. His flight had arrived, and other passengers had already come and gone—but no sign of Hixxy.

I called his father back in England. He had left that morning and was away. Then where was he? I checked with Customs, but they wouldn't give any information unless it was to the police. I visited the airport police station, but they couldn't help me either.

I called Hixxy's dad again, and now we wondered if maybe he hadn't made his plane? What if he'd gotten into a car wreck or something? We had no idea.

I spent four hours at the airport and finally had to leave. His airline had no other flights arriving that day, and there was no sign of him. I left a message with his father, and we hoped he would turn up.

I got back to the venue close to our opening time of 9 p.m. I met the head of security, a fellow named John who ran security regularly at the E! Network. He spoke to me about what to do with contraband that was confiscated. He gave me some options, one of which was that contraband be handed over to me. I kind of laughed at the idea, but I now realize that's likely standard procedure for many promoters or nightclubs. I left him with the instructions that it be destroyed.

Nine p.m. rolled around, and DJ Euphonic, who would be one of my regulars for years, started with his first-ever set. His parents came to see him.

A lineup formed outside. Between that and my advance ticket sales, I felt we were safe.

I didn't know what to do about the lack of Hixxy or whether he'd still show up on his own, so I left the DJ schedule as it was for the time being.

By midnight, we were at capacity, and the party was rocking. You could tell something special was happening. The amount of joy and happiness on everyone's face was clear.

Still no Hixxy, though, so I changed the schedule with a magic marker and gave myself a longer set.

One a.m. rolled around, and it was time for me to play my first set at Hullabaloo. E-by-gum was there with me.

The nerves didn't affect me. The sound system was flawless. I had the records. I had attracted a full house to my vision. This was

the culmination of all of my work. It was a magical 90 minutes that whizzed by in a flash. I couldn't believe it—my dream to be a promoter and play music to an appreciative crowd was happening.

We were all having such a great time that when E-by-gum made the official announcement that Hixxy hadn't made it, it didn't matter anymore. Hullabaloo was happening. This was a truly special event the likes of which none of us had been part of before, and we all knew it.

The happy hardcore anthems I dropped got the kind of crowd reaction you dream of. Ravers who were front and centre were shrieking in delight, screaming for more. It was the start of the famous Hullabaloo crowd we'd become known for. By the end of my set, I was on the moon.

Around 7 a.m., I walked around with fruit platters that I had prepared. It just seemed like a good idea. I liked to give away free things, whether it was whistles, fruit, or coffee. It made my patrons feel appreciated. And I did appreciate them. I never understood how some other promoters could be so callous towards the very people that bought the tickets and made it all possible.

By 9 a.m., the party was over, but I was still buzzing on a natural high about being involved in something so special. I sat with JoE.P. until noon, reliving the event. He had been to a lot of raves himself, and he knew we were on to something.

The event broke even. I didn't lose anything, but I also didn't make anything. It didn't matter in that moment.

After cleaning up, it was time to go. Because Hixxy never came, I was able to use his hotel room that I had paid for. At least I got to sleep in a real bed after a long day and night.

The next day I called Hixxy's dad and found out what had happened. He did get on the flight and had made it to Canada. The problem was, he didn't know what to tell Canadian Customs about the purpose of his trip. They questioned the fact that he

was only going to be in Canada for 18 hours, probably thinking it had something to do with drugs. He didn't want to say he was working here as a DJ, since we had no paperwork. He also didn't want to get me potentially in trouble, so he wouldn't say who he was visiting. So that left them with a lot of unanswered questions, which obviously wasn't good.

Because of that, they put him on the next flight back to England. During that whole time, he was not allowed to make a phone call or let anyone know what had happened to him. The good news was, he was safe, other than having a really long weekend.

So that was it. Hixxy was home safe, and the first Hullabaloo was in the history books. Now I just had to figure out how to actually make a living at this.

From: PETE
To: Anabolic Frolic

What up, I just wanted to drop a line and tell you what an amazing time I had at Hulla. It was my first Hullabaloo and my first Canadian party! I'm From NYC and have been to my share of parties, but never before have I experienced something this amazing. Honestly the party defined good vibe. It seriously was one of the best experiences for me. I just wanted to give you props because your set was amazing as well!

Okay that's all for now. Thank you once again for I night I will always remember! I'm planning to make it in April for my Birthday and know it will be just as amazing.

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 12

LIVING IN THE OFFICE

After each gig, I came back to my home, a 10' by 12' studio office, from October 1996 until July 1998. It was located in a building that had been renovated for film and television post-production suites. The primary purpose of a room like mine was to house a video or audio editing system. When my uncle Yuri had offered that I take it over, the price was right; after all, it was just a little office, not an apartment. I had a couch and chair for visitors, a computer desk, and some shelving units and a turntable station. I had racks on the wall for vinyl display. Hidden away was a microwave and my living necessities, like clothes and a futon mattress, that I would roll up out of the way when visitors would come by.

The building had a shower room located near the washrooms, which I had a key for. It was mostly unused, except by another studio owner who apparently also lived in the building.

My floor held about a dozen other suites for studios, and many were rented by sound editors. During the day, the doors would be open and the floor would be abuzz with the sounds of animal noises, gunshots, dialog replacement, and music being edited. It was a cool place.

Elsewhere in the building there happened to be a phone sex office, with phone sex operators working in-house. That was in-

teresting. Three times a day I'd see the shift changes, and from my office I'd hear the ruckus of dozens of heeled shoes clattering past my door.

I have some big news for phone sex callers—the young college girls shown in the ads aren't working there. Sometimes when I was exploring the building, I'd get a view of the phone sex office as someone came or left. From what I could see, there were rows of desks with phones with the ladies sitting by them, like any office phone bank. The median age was probably in the forties. I once chatted with a German lady outside who was probably easily in her sixties. She spoke with a strong German accent and apparently specialized in domination fantasies, where I expect the accent worked well for her.

As for me, it was a secret to everyone that I lived in my office. Obviously I was trying to project a successful DJ image for my fans and customers, rather than an image of someone who was technically homeless. I also didn't want anyone in the building itself to know I was living there. That meant I couldn't be wandering to the bathroom in a bathrobe and with bedhead hair. Each day I'd wake up, and using only the reflection in my television, would wet my hair with a bottle of water and style it. I'd get dressed and then walk to the bathroom as if it was a normal break during the day for me, and I had long been at work in my office.

Sometimes this was an issue. Working in the rave scene meant I'd keep very late hours and would sleep very late, until the afternoon or evening—only helped by the fact that my office was completely pitch-black, so there would be no natural light to keep me on any sort of rhythm. Like any regular person, you often wake up in the middle of your sleep for a pee break. The problem for me was that it would be the middle of the day, and all the offices in my hall were humming along. Even worse, the building manager's office was directly across the hall from mine. Unless I wanted to

wake up enough to go through the trouble of making myself presentable for the walk to the washroom, I'd have to find another solution.

It was right in front of my eyes. I began to urinate into empty water bottles in my room. Before long, they would start to collect. I'd keep them out of sight of visitors, of course, and they just started to collect, hidden away. Finally, one night, I grabbed a garbage bag and filled it with my "recycled" water bottles. The bag was pretty heavy, but I managed to put it in the garbage bin at the end of the hall with all the other refuse.

A couple of days later, the building manager approached me about my "bottle disposal." Apparently, the garbage man opened the bag and found my bottles, thinking they were old undrunk bottles of tea I was disposing of. I wasn't sure whether the building manager figured it out, but who would think that someone with access to a washroom would fill several bottles with pee instead? He said I should be sending the emptied bottles to the recycling bin, not the garbage.

From that point on, I made sure I disposed of any bottles in a far more covert manner.

Even though Nokturnal was a specialty record shop that was open by appointment only, I'd still get occasional drop-in customers. Of course, I could very well be sleeping on the floor when they came knocking. I'd be in no way presentable and my mattress was on the floor, so I'd ignore the door and pretend I wasn't there. Sometimes my visitors would wait for me outside the door, while I cursed under my breath that they should just go away. I was too embarrassed to reveal at the time that I was actually living there. I felt it wasn't going to help my image if I did so.

One morning, there were some knocks at my office door. I ignored them as usual, and finally the visitor went away. With it being a Saturday, I got out of bed and wandered to the washroom

to clean up, all the other suites generally being closed on the weekends.

As I returned, to my horror, DJ Frisky was waiting for me at my door, having come back. I had no choice but to let him in. I made a feeble excuse that I had "crashed" here last night and stepped inside to quickly clean up my mattress and blankets.

"You sleep here, dude?" he asked.

"Oh, just sometimes," I answered.

As lonely and dark as that office was when I first moved in, I did get used to it in time. My office living situation was my biggest secret, and I was too ashamed to admit otherwise. Now, in hindsight, I see that period as paying my dues, and I'm quite proud of how dedicated I was to my cause.

From: George
To: Anabolic Frolic

I haven't been partying for very long, but for as long as I have been, and as long as I've been speaking to more "experienced" ravers, I have always wanted to go to a Hullabaloo party. They just sounded like nothing else. So I finally got my chance—no prior commitments, I had money; no excuses. But I built it up so much in my mind already. set myself up for disappointment, right?

Wrong. Dead wrong. What I experienced on Saturday night was one of the most positive, energetic, fun, and happy atmospheres I have ever had the sheer pleasure to be a part of—and man, did I feel a part of it! It was the most incredible vibe I've ever seen. I'm having trouble putting it in words, but Hullabaloo is what raving is all about; what raving was meant to be. The only downside is that now I'm asking myself: "what party could ever top that?" I have a sneaking suspicion that the answer is: the next Hullabaloo.

Basically, the gist of this email is: Thank you oh so much, Chris, and please, keep it up (although there is no doubt in my mind that you will).

PLUR

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 13

PHASE 2

With the tremendous success of the Happy2bHardcore CD, I guess it was obvious to everyone that there would be others. I was never certain whether Moonshine would use me again, though, or if they'd get different guest DJs for each chapter. So it was great news when Moonshine contacted me about Chapter 2 for a September release, only seven months after the release of the first one.

There was no shortage of music to pull from to be considered for this new album. At Nokturnal, I was probably importing 30–40 new hardcore releases every month. I tried to pick a mix that was unique to me and not just a rehash of other compilations that were out in the UK at the time.

Many CD compilations in the UK were produced by the same DJs who made the music or owned the record labels. To that end, most of these compilations were heavily weighted with that particular DJ's or label's own songs. Fair enough, they collected the royalties on each one.

Because as a DJ I was not affiliated with any one label, the Happy2bHardcores became a very strong series, because they truly contained the best of the best songs, with equal representation for all artists.

I'd even go so far as to limit the number of times an artist would appear on any one Happy2bHardcore. I didn't want the same names throughout the track listing, so if you look at any back cover, you will never see the same names more than twice, whereas on a competing album, you could see the same names ten or more times.

This gave the Happy2bHardcores a very broad sound, and they truly would become "best of" compilations for each particular year.

Chapter 2 would be released mid-September, a perfect tie-in for my next event.

From: jazz e jane
To: Anabolic Frolic

hello Chris,

I just wanted to thank you and give you my biggest respects ever :)

I guess people flame you all of the time, even though you're doing an amazing job!!

If it weren't for you, none of these people would ever been able to experience the wicked sounds of all the DJs YOU bring over and the amazing Happy Hardcore you bring and have brought to Toronto!!

You are totally an inspiration to me and many others. For real!!! You were the one that introduced me to happy hardcore…nuff said :)

Your parties are amazing and will continue to be amazing so just keep plugging along. I know a lot of people who could never even come close to fathoming the amount of work you put in to pull these parties off, but just so you know there are TONS of us who do know that u work tremendously hard on these parties to make them special for US, the Hulla massive!!!!!

As for people complaining…YOU CANT PLEASE EVERYONE…ya know…

anyway

I just thought I'd let u know i hold u in the HIGHEST RESPECTS!!!!!!

Thanks again for a beautiful night :)

mad hugz n phat smilez

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 14

HULLA 2

A British raver who had come to Canada to visit during the summer of '96 had given me some good advice about event throwing—that I had to follow up a successful rave as soon as possible. So only a few weeks after our first event, I had already prepared for our second event. I made photocopied pre-flyers in time for that summer's World Electronic Music Festival. I would spend several hours walking from car to car, giving them out.

Earlier, I had made contact with *Dream* magazine, one of the UK's biggest rave culture magazines, and spoken with the editor, Nick Bradley, asking for his help getting some talent for the next event. He suggested DJ Spinback and MC Ruff.

Spinback was founder of a hugely popular pirate radio station in London, called Dream FM. Pirate radio was a big thing in London during this time, with lots of dance stations. DJs would set up illegal radio towers on top of tall residential buildings, broadcasting music that you would never hear on the radio, well before the internet would make that a lot easier. It became a cat-and-mouse game with the authorities, who could find and confiscate the illegal antennas, only to have the DJs set up again hours later from another building.

Spinback also happened to be a dual citizen and carried a Canadian passport from having been born in Canada while his

parents were here for work. After the drama with Hixxy, this was a huge positive. MC Ruff was one of the top hardcore MCs of the era and had made a name for himself, years earlier, as the tour MC for the band Prodigy.

Dream also ran a feature about Hullabaloo, a two-page review with photos from our party. We were making waves, and ravers in the UK got to see that their music was crossing the ocean.

Based on our success with the first event and the extremely good reviews and word of mouth, I set my sights higher this time. The budget swelled to a break-even point of 1000 people, basically double the attendance of our first event. The talent was booked, flyers were printed, promotion had begun, tickets were being sold. All I needed now was a venue.

This "not having a venue" thing might seem crazy, and it probably was, but I was able to get around this for my promotion by using the rave tradition of secret venues. During that era, venues were always a secret until the night of the event; there would be a meeting point announced, where ravers would go on the night of, to find out where to go.

So my flyer only said that the meeting point was Nathan Phillips Square, which was the square in front of Toronto City Hall and a major hub in the city. With six weeks to go, I began looking for a venue.

I still didn't have a huge budget to work with, and tickets were still priced modestly. But I had a much bigger, more expensive talent lineup.

I did have one candidate, a bottled water distributor located in the Toronto Port Lands, with a warehouse we could use. In fact, it had never been used for a rave before, which was always a plus, since ravers loved virgin spaces; they added to the mystique of the party. The building itself was very old, actually used to make munitions during World War 2. It would be a classic rave venue.

The bottled water guys were great. They were gay, plugged into the gay scene, and totally into what I was doing with our raves. They saw an opportunity to generate some cash with the rental, plus sell their water, which could be a very lucrative business. There was the big warehouse, plus a gated outdoor area which we could use. Being in the Port Lands area, there was no residential for many miles in any direction, so there was no fear of noise complaints.

Everything was good until the week of the event, when the owner called with the disastrous news—they were not cleared by the fire department for an event like this. We couldn't have our Hullabaloo there.

Great. Just great. *A week before the show, and I have no space. Plane tickets are bought for my overseas guests, flyers have been on the streets forever, tickets have been sold. If I can't pull this off, I'm finished.* I was now left scrambling.

As a promoter, you begin to develop an eye for finding potential rave venues. Always scouting buildings with "For lease" signs, open fields, always evaluating if they might be able to be used. I was given a tip about a Ukrainian banquet hall in downtown Toronto. I went to check it out on the Wednesday before our event. Yes, four days before an event of 1000 people, with international talent flying in, I was checking out a venue.

I was greeted by two old crotchety Ukrainian men. As luck would have it, I have some Ukrainian in my background, so I played that card to build some rapport. They showed me their space, basically two nice banquet floors, hard wood, the kind you would have a wedding at. It would do nicely for us, and the price was right. We immediately drew up a contract, but I had to clarify for them that this was not a wedding, which they had written on the contract, but a "party." They also took a damage deposit, which I'd never get back.

I think these guys were happy to get my money but had no idea what this was all about.

With a couple days to go, I had a venue. Now I just had to put the rest of the event together. We still needed lights, sound, security, decorations, and fans (because I knew this venue wasn't terribly well ventilated), and I had to pick up my talent, which would be arriving on Friday—and all the other loose ends. This kind of schedule would become par for the course.

Because we needed all our own sound and lights, I had to bring in an outside company to handle them. I was recommended an outfit called Audio Dynamics, owned by a dude named Cosimo. I met him at the venue on Thursday for the first time. He did a walk-through of the building and came up with a great system that I could afford. Cosimo would become my go-to guy for all production needs for every event I'd ever throw.

Spinback and Ruff arrived at the airport on Friday, on schedule and without mishaps. Finally, something was working out as it should.

Ruff was a big-time pot smoker and immediately needed to be hooked up after his flight. Me being a completely drug-free guy, I didn't even know any pot smokers we could hit up. Ruff had a solution—we'd drive around downtown looking for one. We spotted some raver-looking types, and sure enough, they had dime bags on them. They'd be coming to Hullabaloo the next day, so to pay them, Ruff comped them some tickets. No biggie, I was just glad he was sorted.

The next day, all three of us swung by the studios of Energy 108 radio for the "Trippin' on Energy" show hosted by MC Flipside. This was a one-hour rave- and underground-based show at the primo time slot of 7 p.m. on Saturday nights. A perfect time for all ravers to tune in and see what was happening that night and get to hear some of the headlining DJs play.

Flipside was very fair with his music coverage and would give usually ignored genres, such as happy hardcore, a chance on his show. Spinback, Ruff, and I were all scheduled guests. We played a little from Chapter 2 and promoted the new CD with an interview, then Ruff and Spinback dropped a set and promoted that night's Hullabaloo. All guns were firing now.

On the night of the event, my friend George gifted the banquet hall's custodian a bottle of vodka. The custodian was quite pleased and retired to his office for the night.

The party was a smash success, and the Hullabaloo legend began to grow. The online reviews started to really take hold.

We hit capacity at 1100 people, so that meant a profit of $1500—for three months' work and the tremendous risk involved. My reputation was growing, but I had not yet figured out how to monetize it. I'd have to continue sleeping on my office floor, eating cans of soup.

From: Robin
To: Anabolic Frolic

Anabolic Frolic -

Hi! I'm a "baby raver" from southern California—meaning I just started raving—but all my friends are accomplished ravers and I've been listening to the music for a while now.

The first happy hardcore I ever heard was when someone let me borrow Happy2BHardcore—I was hooked from the start—listened to you spin live on Groove Radio a few months back and even taped it—am now a happy hardcore convert for life!! :}

Loved your site, love your music. You're adorable. (Oh yeah, I'm female.)

Next time you play in southern California, I don't care if I have to sell my soul to the Christian Devil to get there, I'll make it!! Hehehe! PLUR and take care!

(Sent by E-mail June 7, 1997)

chapter 15

MEETING ROBIN

Growing up, I never had much opportunity to develop girlfriends. My total lack of interest in school meant I didn't spend one second longer there than I had to (and later would stop going altogether). I was focused on my job, which didn't have any young women working at it.

That left me with next to no prospects other than a couple of unfulfilled crushes.

Some of my best friends also didn't have girlfriends, so perhaps I didn't realize how lonely I had been. I felt OK being by myself. But I was confident it would change some day. There was no fear of being a "40-year-old virgin" and I didn't give it too much thought.

That all changed the moment I met Robin.

I'm not sure what possessed me that day, boredom most likely, but I decided to visit the #rave channel of the internet's IRC chat system. In the mid-1990s, there were few places to actually converse online. Internet Relay Chat was one of them.

This wasn't an activity I had done before, but I was aware that Hullabaloo was getting a lot of support from places on the internet, such as #rave, so I decided to pop in.

After a few minutes, when I established that I was the "real" Anabolic Frolic, I settled in to chatting with the ravers. I then received a private message from "ShadowR."

"OMG…Is it really you?"

"Yep."

"You are so amazing. I have your CD. I've listened to it a million times. I love it."

"Cool. Glad you liked it."

"My name is Robin. Here are some pictures of me."

I then received some shots of a late-teenage girl on the beach, in a bikini. Yowza.

"I have to go, I'm heading camping for the weekend. You'll be back here on Monday? PLEASE?"

"Sure," I responded. I had never been the recipient of the attentions of a strange girl like this. I guess it's to be expected as you become well known, but I hadn't seen the effects yet.

I never had a girl be interested in me enough to send bikini photos. What's not to like about that?

I popped back in on Monday, hoping to see my mystery girl, but there was no sign of her. Darn.

A few days passed, and I guess I had given up, when suddenly a private message arrived from "ShadowR."

"Hey! Sorry I wasn't around, we ended up out of town for longer than I thought."

We struck up regular internet chats. Back in 1997, it was too embarrassing to say you met someone online, not like these days, when it's common.

As luck would have it, I was scheduled to be in LA three weeks later for the release of Happy2bHardcore Chapter 2. This wasn't going to be some long, drawn-out net romance.

Truth be told, I had strong feelings for her even before we met. And she did for me, I think. We'd complement our online

chats with long distance phone calls. And in those three weeks before we met in person, we seemed to come a really far way. I could hardly call her a girlfriend yet, but she was the best prospect I ever had.

It was exciting for her too. Robin was a big fan. Apparently a friend of hers had given her a bootleg copy of Chapter 1 and said she'd like it. She loved it. Now here she was, developing a relationship with the DJ she idolized.

She was certainly more of a free spirit than anyone I had come across before. Just eighteen years old, she had completed high school but still lived at home, figuring out what to do next. She thought maybe she could be a stripper and make money for a flash car.

Besides being sexy and good-looking, she was also a geek. She probably knew more about computers than I did and would attend nerd fests like Def-Con, the hacker convention held annually in Las Vegas.

She loved raves and happy hardcore. It gave us a lot in common.

I was booked to play at a release party rave for Chapter 2 in LA, and of course she'd be coming with me as a date. I'd also have about four days in the area with her.

Flying down there was nerve-wracking. What if we didn't like each other in person? There were plenty of examples of whirlwind internet romances that didn't make it past the two-second mark once they were face to face.

I landed in LA, picked up my rental, and drove to Robin's house. Finally arriving at her front door, I rang the bell. Robin opened the door. I smiled—she looked just like how she was supposed to. Long braided red hair, slender, very cute. We hugged. This felt good. I hoped she felt good too.

Perhaps out of nervousness, or just Robin being Robin, she led me immediately to her kitchen where the computer was,

where she just had to show me the precursor to the South Park TV show—the five-minute "Spirit of Christmas" short. South Park hadn't hit yet, but this five-minute short was an early internet sensation.

She then brought me to her bedroom. It was ridiculous. Much of the walls were decorated in crayon with quotes by her friends, drawings, and lots of posters and rave memorabilia. A signed Happy2bHardcore poster I had mailed a couple weeks earlier was tacked prominently to the wall.

We laid down on the bed a moment and kissed. Yeah, that felt good.

Robin's mom was home, so we weren't going to push our luck too much, but it was nice, and she smiled back at me after each kiss. My body felt electric from the sensation.

We got ready to head out together on our first "date." My gig was tomorrow, so tonight was free. We had dinner at Jerry's Famous Deli in West Hollywood near the hotel suite Moonshine was putting me up in. There was some silence during our time there, and nervousness, but it seemed OK. It was weird—we were still able to be comfortable around each other, when in another context or with another person, this could have been really awkward.

One thing that was off-putting was that as much as we were into each other, Robin had some rules.

"I just want to make it clear that we are not boyfriend and girlfriend," she said flatly.

"Umm, OK." I honestly didn't know what to do with that.

"It's just that I've been hurt, and I don't want that again. At least for now."

I agreed, because, well, what choice did I have?

Besides her semantics about what to call our relationship, I could tell that she was really into me, from the way she gazed at me to how close she constantly held herself to me. That was a relief.

After dinner, we went to my hotel room. It was a suite with a fireplace. A fully functioning babe lair, some might call it. I'm not going to get into the gory details of what happened that night and weekend, because that's not the book I'm writing, but I will say that perhaps out of nervousness, perhaps because we felt so strongly and didn't want to screw it up, we did not have sex. Our time alone was spent cuddling in front of the fireplace. It was intense in its own way, and we were really falling for each other.

The irony was that Robin had admitted that had we not met online, she had fully planned to find out what hotel I was staying at and plotted to seduce me. She might have been my first groupie, but the cards were played a little differently.

The next night was the CD release rave party, and Robin came with me, decked out in her LA candy rave wear. I could sense my evolution as a DJ since my first LA appearance—more seasoned. The crowd was electric, as always, but I felt more in control of them. I was totally in the zone, totally digging the fact that there was a girl out there who was totally into me and thought I was a king. Maybe there was more than one, but I knew there was at least one.

After the set, Robin was stuck to me like glue. Hands around me, pulling me close to her body at all times. I hung around to chat with my fans and sign some CDs.

One of the raver fan girls asked me, "Is that your girlfriend?"

I couldn't answer, because Robin had made her feelings clear only a day earlier.

"Is that your girlfriend?" the raver asked again.

I turned to Robin. She responded, looking at me, "Well, am I?" She was smiling.

I guess she was. That 24 hours had been like a lifetime with us. She had already broken her own rule; we were smitten.

I had to bring Robin home each night out of respect for her parents and the fact that she lived at home. Plus, I didn't want to them to see me as some big-shot DJ who just used their daughter as he pleased. I wanted their approval and respect. After the rave, I dropped her off and then picked her up again the next day for our final day together.

The next night, we cuddled again in front of the fireplace but this time, something was different. Robin began to sob at the idea that I was leaving in hours. How were we going to make this work? We lived thousands of miles away from each other, in two different countries, no less.

We said our goodbyes the next day. She sobbed again. We definitely were in love, whether or not we had said it to each other yet. And love would find a way.

From: Bruce
To: Anabolic Frolic

You throw the BEST fucking parties in the WORLD. NEVER have I EVER been to a party like that. This is just a personal thanks. Thank you much!

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 16

BUILDING MOMENTUM

Our third Hullabaloo event, titled Love and Magic, was a watershed event for me. I was taking Hullabaloo from a small promoter into the big leagues. I felt more pressure to deliver bigger and bigger events.

The owner of the bottled water company I had spoken to earlier contacted me. Apparently, he had met the demands of the fire department, with some new fire exits. We could use his space. All right, I thought to myself, now we're cooking!

Talent-wise, I put together our biggest lineup to date: two full rooms of music, headlined by some of the biggest names in UK hardcore at that time—DJ Druid, whose tape was one of the first I had bought, along with DJ Vinylgroover and MC Magika. In the second arena, to balance things, I brought in a trance DJ called Madam Zu. In addition to our growing roster of homegrown talent, this party had a big feel about it.

You'd think I could catch a lucky break, but nope. The owner from the water company called again. The fire department had come by again, and because his building was old and made of wood, there would need to be a sprinkler system. We were completely out of luck, again with just one week to go before the party. We were smelling a trend here, and I didn't like it.

I was left scrambling for a space. My contact at the Ukrainian Centre was not interested in doing any more raves due to the damage to their floors, so they would not rent to me. I was between a rock and a hard place now.

I got a tip about a nightclub in Toronto's Greek Town that would be open to renting to me. Sometimes nightclubs that are doing poorly for business will take the quick cash of a rave rental, and this place wanted the money.

This would be my first taste of crooked club owners. I don't know if they were mafia-tied, but it sure felt like they were. The space was lovely, and the main room was killer and was fully decked out with great lighting. The people were a little bristly to deal with, but otherwise, it seemed OK at the time.

The problems started pretty much when I arrived that night. They had a problem with my security team, which I had been using since the E Space days. They wanted some of their own people there—which I had to pay for, of course. They also started nickel and diming me for extras: $200 extra for the lighting guy, $500 for extra clean-up.

They had me bent over, and I had no choice but to take it. What could I do, cancel the party? The show had to go on, no matter what, and we had to make it till morning.

Right away, there were problems with the goon security guards they brought in. They treated this like a nightclub crowd, not a pacifist rave crowd. So ravers who got thrown out for various offences were thrown out in an obscenely rough way, which I was powerless to do anything about.

It was also clear that the owners had changed their mind about my event. They didn't care for it and just assumed the party would end early. I felt like I was hanging on for dear life by my fingernails.

They also reneged on their capacity. I was expecting 1500+ and sold 1000 presale tickets, and at 9 p.m., they decided 1000 was going to be enough. They instructed their door security people to only let in tickets, and everyone else was told to go home. I watched helplessly as this played out in front of me. One thousand people would barely cover my expenses; another three months spent on this event, to make no profit. I wasn't leaving my office any time soon.

A raver approached me to comment, "I've been watching you deal with these guys all night, and it's amazing to watch your voice and body language as you manage these guys. You really know how to handle them."

I didn't realize it at the time, but he was referring to my learned behaviors of dealing in the face of anger. The beneficial malfunction was working here, as I deescalated with these hard-to-deal-with club owners.

That was the bad, but there was also a lot of good. The main room was glorious, a beautiful nightclub venue with a proper stage. An expensive lighting system was already at the club, far beyond what I could rent on my own. This venue had never been used for a rave before, so everything about it felt new.

The Hullabaloo vibe inside was really starting to blossom. Ravers were really starting to get into the hardcore. The energy, the collective unity of the crowd, it was really coming together.

"I don't know about you, but people have to remember this party. It's history in the making," MC Flipside declared to the crowd. "This has to be the best rave of the past five years."

That was high praise, but everyone in the venue was feeling it.

I also started to notice that people had made outfits to wear, special for this Hullabaloo. It would become a standard thing in later years to create outfits for each Hulla, but this night, I can say, sparked the beginning.

Candy fashions were also starting to come into being. Beaded bracelets and fun-fur would become the Hulla candy raver uniform, but we were just starting to see them at this event.

MC Magika came on the microphone and asked the crowd to come together, raise their hands, and hold the hands of the person next to them—something he would do back home in the UK—and our Hulla Ravers did it immediately. With each event, the magic atmosphere that would separate Hullabaloo from every other rave was becoming tangible.

I played my set at 5 a.m. This would be a time slot I would hold for many years, because it allowed me to get through the execution of most of the rave and get everyone in, and by 5 a.m., I could finally leave my position at the front entrance and go to the stage for one hour.

I can remember the relief during my set. I was finally able to enjoy myself after the intensity of dealing with these club owners all night.

We managed to get to 8 a.m., and the party was over. I made it alive. I was so disgusted with the owners, I left without even talking to them or asking about my $500 deposit. I knew I wasn't going to see it again anyways.

I would never go back there, nor would I ever want to. I did a silent cheer when I noticed months later that the club had closed permanently and would turn into a gym.

Besides the craziness behind the scenes that I had to deal with, the party itself was legendary. Though I made no money, it was really satisfying to throw such a well-received event. The fact that several hundred people were turned away would only add to our reputation as the hottest ticket in town.

From: Orbital E
To: Anabolic Frolic

Dear Anabolic Frolic, this is a little story about how I learned to love Happy Hardcore and what it now means to me.

When I first started to attend raves I hated Happy Hardcore with a passion. I would not listen to it nor would I stay in a room where it was being played. I started looking into raves and rave culture/history on the internet and came across some sites dedicated to candy kids, PLUR and of course Happy Hardcore. After ingesting as much info as I could I discovered that the candy kid lifestyle and manner of dress most suited my personality and that by not giving Happy Hardcore a chance I was being an asshole. So I gave it a shot with Happy2bHardcore Chapter 3 and I liked it. This was spring 2000 and I was still new to the scene.

At the beginning of the summer I met a girl who goes to university in San Francisco via the message board I administrate and her being a candy kid we became fast friends. She encouraged me to listen to more Happy Hardcore and to go to more parties. The more and more time we spent together the more and more we listened to Happy Hardcore together and the more and more we realized that we were falling in love with each other via our candy kid/Happy Hardcore connection.

I realized one day while talking to her on instant message and listening to some Happy Hardcore singles I had that Happy Hardcore is love songs for ravers.

Everything about it screams LOVE. I now know that as long as there is Happy Hardcore there is still love in the scene and that everywhere two candy kids come together as a couple in love there is Happy Hardcore playing in their heads.

So essentially what I am saying is that Happy Hardcore=Love and Happy Hardcore is how I found Love.

PLUR

Kandy 4 Life

(Posted on the Internet)

chapter 17

ROBIN GETS ON A PLANE

We had a big problem with my being in Toronto and Robin living in California. Daily chats and nightly phone calls helped, but obviously, long-distance relationships can be difficult.

I had one idea, though—I was booked to DJ at a rave in Ohio that month. I asked Robin if she'd like to meet me there.

"Really?!" she gasped.

The only problem was her parents. Could she tell them she was running around the country like a groupie for her superstar DJ boyfriend? As far as they knew, I was just a guy she met one weekend. They had no idea that our feelings were much deeper.

She elected not to tell them, and instead, told them she was going camping for the weekend, something she did with her friends regularly. It wasn't too suspicious.

Using the money I was paid for the gig, I bought her a plane ticket to the Cleveland airport. It's funny to think back, but in the mid-nineties, flying by plane was a totally different experience than it is now. Robin didn't drive, so she had no licence. Her passport was held in a safety deposit box, and it would be too suspicious to ask for. So she flew to Ohio with nothing more than a video rental membership card. The only thing the airlines did was

thoroughly search her carry-on luggage to make sure everything was on the up and up.

I doubt too many couples have Ohio as a fond memory of a romantic weekend, but it was for us. Robin got to see me spin again, something she found extremely sexy. With the exception of the one hour of my set, we were physically attached for the duration of the weekend.

There was something here, something intense, that made our relationship seem more real and not just a bagging of a DJ thing. We admitted to each other that we were in love.

The first time Robin told me she loved me, it felt like a literal physical electrical jolt through my entire body. I knew I loved her already, and to have that reciprocated was an amazing thing.

I was rational-minded enough to know that relationships do end, though, and the odds were against us, but this was an intense connection. I had no idea where it might go.

From: Linds*
To: Anabolic Frolic

Hey Chris. It is I, Lindser*.

I've been wanting to send you this e-mail for a while now, but I figured I'd wait until the post-Hulla congrats and such were over.

I thought you did an amazing job and I personally had a super time. thank you from the bottom of my heart for creating a place where I can be that happy.

I also wanted to commend you on the caliber of your character!!! That may sound super weird, but the more I get to know you, the more I realize that you are a very genuine and loving person. I was so amazed that you were there for Will's birthday. It meant so much to him, and strangely enough, to me! That was just another example of what a great person you are.

Well that is all! Congrats on your party- you have a fan for life in Little ol' Lindser!

Hope to see you soon

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 18

ANABOLIC FROLIC GOES TO THE UK

Even though I really couldn't afford to do so, I felt a large need to go to the "motherland" of the UK. I wanted to meet face-to-face with a lot of the contacts and DJs I had become acquainted with and basically see for myself how things worked over there.

Two weeks after Love and Magic, I was on my first international flight. I was initially going to stay at the flat where MC Magika lived with Nick Bradley, editor of *Dream Magazine*. I had been booked for a couple of DJ appearances while I was there, so I brought my record bag with me.

I landed in Heathrow airport, with no sign of Magika. I called his flat. He answered but was obviously sleeping. I'd have to wait 90 minutes for him to make it to the airport to get me.

Upon returning to his flat, I met Nick. He had been one of my initial contacts in England and was very helpful in connecting me with talent to play at Hullabaloo. *Dream* had also run a review of our first event and ran a two-page spread of photos and words from Spinback and Ruff about their trip over to Canada for our second event.

After a customary breakfast of bacon and beans I crashed on the air mattress they had laid out for me.

That night, we hit the Labyrinth Club, a regular weekly rave party in London, with multiple floors featuring different styles of music. The ground floor was their hardcore room, and I was instantly pulled in by it.

What struck me instantly was how alike everyone was dressed. The girls were in white shorty-shorts with sports bras and sneak- ers, and the guys were all wearing yellow construction jackets. There was a definite rave uniform.

Their way of dancing was all very similar as well, kind of like a cross-training hop. It was interesting to observe the differences between the UK and our emerging Hullabaloo hardcore scene back home.

My biggest shock came when I entered the washrooms. I spotted a few club goers cutting lines of cocaine on a counter—my first experience being in a room with cocaine. I can't explain why, but I was a little frightened. I truly was a babe in the woods when it came to drug use. I had never even gotten high smoking weed, and despite the rave scene's reputed heavy drug use, it was just not something I was ever around. I had never met these people and had no idea who they were, but watching them inhale lines of coke with rolled-up ten pound notes, with the following sniffles, was a real turn-off. That dry, never-ending sniffling revolted me. I don't know how much better they felt or how high they were getting, but there was nothing appealing about what I was seeing. I returned to the familiar sounds of the club.

Besides that incident I enjoyed how much they were really into their hardcore, though, and it was a treat to hear the latest hardcore releases.

The next day, I went to stay at a house where Spinback lived with two other famous hardcore DJs, Jimmy J and Vinyltrixta.

Jimmy J owned the legendary Slammin' Vinyl record store in London, a place to which I used to send DJ Damage to clean out for me. I was looking forward to hitting it myself.

As luck would have it, *Dream Magazine* was producing a free cover CD of old-school breakbeat songs from the '91–'93 era. It had to be mixed that day, and I was invited to get in on that and be billed on the CD. So the following month, "For Those Who Remember cover CD mixed by Anabolic Frolic, Spinback & Vinyltrixta" was released with the magazine. *Dream* gave me billing as North America's #1 Hardcore DJ.

I went with Jimmy to his Slammin' Vinyl shop, an entire three floors in a building located in a London shopping district. The bottom floor was clothing, the second floor had drum and bass, and on the third floor was an entire room of hardcore vinyl.

Jimmy had some errands to run, so I was left watching the fort for him for several hours. I didn't mind, and it was fun dealing with the customers.

After staying at Jimmy J's for a couple of nights, I was invited to stay with MC Ruff at his home. "Good luck," Jimmy said, "It'll be interesting."

Interesting it was. Ruff was still living at home with his adoptive father and several siblings. It was in a rough part of London, and the house itself was rundown.

The place seemed to have an "open house" vibe about it, with people coming and going like Grand Central Station. Everyone seemed to be high all the time, smoking weed.

I was given a spare room to sleep in, but it was basically a storage room filled with crap and a mattress on the floor, which I literally crashed on. Ruff was one of the top hardcore MCs of the time but seemed to be poor. I had no doubts about where his money went.

That night, I was sleeping on the mattress in my room when I could hear that several people had arrived. There were lots of footsteps and voices. The door to my room opened. I pretended I was asleep, while I heard the distinct noise of some foil and drugs being lit by a lighter, and inhaled breaths.

I'm not sure what exactly constitutes smoking crack, but I think they were doing that in my room. They finally got their hit and left; I pretended I was asleep the whole time.

Being in London, it was cool to be around so many people who loved hardcore and made their living in it—a big difference from me being a one-man show back home. In London, I'd visit the local CD music stores and see an entire Hardcore section, versus a lone Happy2bHardcore back home in the larger Electronica section.

I also got to visit the London offices of Alphamagic, at the time the biggest distributor of hardcore vinyl. That in itself was stunning. Besides this being a huge warehouse stacked to the ceiling with the back catalogs on most hardcore labels, several hardcore music producers had their studios in-house, including Hixxy, Sy & Unknown, and Fade & Bananaman. Hixxy was auditioning singers for his Essential Platinum releases. I got to sit in with Fade and their relatively low-tech studio, still utilizing ten-year-old Atari ST computers midi-synced to various synthesizers. Happy hardcore was always a cheap low-tech music, made by some very creative regular people. It was inspiring to see the ingenuity.

That night, about 25 of us hardcore DJs went for some go-cart racing. It was the first time I had been to a real go-cart track, wearing the overalls and everything. There were several heats, and we were ranked. DJ Hixxy came in first place, and I came dead last. I blamed it on driving on the wrong side of the track.

It was a great trip and was eye-opening to the popularity of hardcore overseas. I was reinvigorated that I was on the right path back home. I just had to last.

From: sweetpea
To: Anabolic Frolic

hey Anabolic,

I just had to say THANK YOU!!!!! I was having a really sad day and I came home and put your Happy 2B Hardcore Chapter 2 cd on and it made me soooo happy!!! Thank you so much!!! You are doing a great job with Hullabaloo and everything! I love Hulla so much and I never miss one! I have to drive all the way from the states, but it's completely worth it!!!! Thank you soooo much! see you at Hulla!!!

lots of love,

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 19

BACK HOME, BILLS TO PAY

I really couldn't afford this trip to England, and with my making no money on the last Hullabaloo, I had bill collectors on me the moment I got back home.

I had bounced the cheque on the printer who had produced the last flyer for our event, even though I had promised the cheque would be good. The phone company was on me for late payment, and my regular calls to Robin were adding up.

Nokturnal Records essentially had ceased operations, because I didn't have the money to finance both that and Hullabaloo. I had no money to order new vinyl from overseas to resell.

Even though the CDs were selling, I didn't know how to get booked with promoters. I didn't have representation and would handle all bookings myself. I definitely wasn't charging appropriate amounts of money, I think partly because I was afraid of being a tough negotiator and because of some sort of misguided thought that it was better to be promoting the music than to be asking for too much money.

Our last Hullabaloo had been a legitimate sellout, but I was worried about being perceived as charging too much and taking advantage of the scene. I was definitely trying to live up to some ideals. I never looked at the value of the experience I was creating; nor did I gauge the demand for it and charge appropriately. An

extra $5 a ticket would have made a big difference in my life, and it likely wouldn't have affected ticket sales at all.

Looking back, I think the years at CompuFun of working for free or for slave wages affected my ability to charge real money. I had gained all those years of business knowledge from them that was working for me in other ways, but this personal defect was hurting me without my realizing it.

I was not just walking a tightrope, I was skipping rope while on the tightrope. And the skipping rope was on fire. And the tightrope as well.

Now, some might ask, why not get a job to tide me over these rough patches? That thought did cross my mind. But I knew that doing so would greatly compromise my dream. Right now, I was living happy hardcore 24/7. I knew if I got a job, I'd fall into that trap of putting in your time at work, coming home tired, eating, and relaxing, and that there would be no time left to do the things I needed to do.

Sounds crazy, but I was either going to succeed at this or burn up in a spectacular ball of flames. And right now, the flames were licking at my feet.

From: JOHNNY
To: Anabolic Frolic

From the bottom of my heart, I'd like to extend a great big thank-you. I have been attending your parties from day one, and as you have grown in size and popularity, you have still remained true to the scene.

As I'm sure you are aware with the overwhelming demand for tickets at Hulla, you could easily run out and increase prices to $30 each, and still sell 5000… but you do not. It is obvious, that unlike many promoters, you are really not in it for the money.

Also, it is obvious that you care about the health and safety of your supporters.

So, once again, thank you very much for creating an environment where so many people can have the time of their lives. Your parties really boost my spirits when I need it most!!

By the way, I'll be dressed up as flamboyant as ever bringing as much positive energy as I possibly can!!

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 20

TRYING TO FIGURE IT OUT

After the fiasco with the last-second venue bookings with the last two Hullas, I needed something stable. I was headed for disaster, burning the candle at both ends. I had no money to survive, let alone to throw events, and the events I did throw, while critical successes, weren't making any money. Not to mention the extreme stress I was going through, trying to make them happen.

I had come into this with eight years of business experience apprenticeship with my years at CompuFun, but I was still young and inexperienced. As I write this twenty years later, obviously I have the knowledge and expertise to do things different. But back then, as an early twenty-something with some heavy baggage, I was trying to figure it out. So far, it wasn't working, except for the knowledge of the potential of what I was chasing.

I had to stop placing myself in such risk, not having a safe and secure venue locked up. I settled on booking one of the most reliable and most used rave venues of that day, a venue called The Warehouse, a space adjoining a famous Toronto club called RPM.

They would give me the stability I need. The problem was the price, more than twice the price of any previous venue. It was also very big, bigger than I needed at the time, with a capacity of 3000 people.

I had no choice, though, but to book it. We came up with a creative way of using the space for an event of less than 2000 people by cutting the main room lengthwise. We'd build a new stage on one side. This would also solve the problem of ravers complaining about the overused space which, at the time, was used dozens of times per year.

I also wanted a hook for this event, and in consultation with Cosimo our production guy, we came up with the idea of a huge laser system that would cost me thousands of dollars to rent for the night. A normal person who was having money problems like mine might cut some corners to save some dollars, but I was hell-bent on delivering the greatest rave experiences I could. I was confident the money would come if I created a world-class experience.

Talent-wise, again I broke new ground by bringing in the legendary DJ Brisk for his first North American appearance. This party was also the first outside-UK appearance of MC Storm. I had met him on my trip to London and was impressed. MC Storm would eventually become the most frequent guest in Hullabaloo's history.

In our second room, I brought in another *Dream Magazine* alumnus, their music editor and DJ, Nick Grant, for hard happy UK house music as an alternative to our hardcore main room.

One thing that had struck me, though, after the success of our first few events, was that no matter how high a profile the talent I brought in from the UK, 80% of the music played at any Hullabaloo was provided by our own in-house talent. Starting at this event, I made a very important decision to give equal billing to all DJs and MCs. Promotion would not focus on a couple of names, which every other promoter did and would continue to do.

By promoting everyone equally, I made a statement that Hullabaloo was the brand. That each event would be of a quality and of standards we set and that it would not revolve around a single

DJ. This would be key in our eventual success and why so many other promoters could go from one very hot party to another that no one went to.

The guest DJs were still there for those who cared about such things, and we would continue to put together world-class line-ups. But first and foremost, from now on, it was a Hullabaloo party. That's what you were buying a ticket for.

Because of the solid venue, the party itself went off without a hitch. The laser system was unreal, so strong, in fact, that I was scared every time it dipped into the crowd. Hullabaloo had evolved to the point of using some of the biggest venues Toronto had to offer.

The problem once again was that I made no money. We had our biggest turnout yet—1600 people—but because of the increased cost of production, I walked away with hardly enough to cover my living expenses for one month.

BOOK BONUS:

See footage from Anabolic Frolic's set at Into the Blue. Go to: https://www.anabolic-frolic.com/bonus/

From: Steve
To: All

Speaking of "Happy Hullabaloo"..... The first thing that comes to mind is PLUR. All you Jaded Arses can totally bite me the next time you say "there is no PLUR" ok! Just because you can't experience PLUR in your region of the United States doesn't mean it doesn't exist elsewhere. Canada is elsewhere and it has PLUR action in full effect.

I got random hugs all night long and even felt inclined to randomly hug people myself once I got into the vibe of the party. One really cool thing at this party were these group hug / dancing circles / line dancing things. Someone would start a country style line dance which then would quickly develop into a circle with everyone hugging and dancing at the same time... So cool, need I say more?

Did I mention that there wasn't a frown in the place? Every single patron was happy.... this is truly something you won't see in America! It most likely has something to do with the different types of music played. Happy hardcore while now very cheesy still is the embodiment of original rave music. So it just generates an overly lovey-dovey atmosphere. Happy hardcore imposes on its listeners to be happy where as other styles don't so kids bring in whatever attitude they came from and that becomes the vibe (which tends to be negative.. especially here on the east coast!).

(Posted on the Internet)

chapter 21

STARVING ARTIST

Hullabaloo and being Anabolic Frolic was a full-time gig, but I was not making full-time dollars—more like slave wages.

Bills were starting to collect. I was behind in my meagre rent, and my long-distance calls to Robin were adding up, with a $1300 phone bill due—well, $1287.00, exactly. I remember this number, because I tried to pull a fast one on the phone company. I made a payment of $128.70 instead. Yeah, aren't I clever? I then reported a payment through their automated system of the full $1287. That bought me a couple of weeks, but I finally lost my phone.

I had a pile of quarters from the door of our last event, and I'd use the payphone across the street for my calls. I still had internet, but there was no technology then for voice chatting. I only had email and chat rooms.

I was four events in. I was gaining a very large following for such a new company promoting a new kind of music, but after all was said and done, I was not making any money.

I wondered how long I could keep this up.

My car insurance had lapsed. I was really pushing my luck by continuing to drive.

I had to resort to using change to buy food. I would buy cans of Campbell's Soup, to be heated in my microwave in the office.

But I was managing to finance the events themselves with advance ticket sales and help from some friends and supporters, who would loan me money to buy things like plane tickets for our international talent.

My issues with the phone company and rent notwithstanding, I still hadn't actually stiffed anyone involved in the scene, so my name and credit were good. Guys like the sound company, I would pay in full on the night of the events. It was the same with the talent. I generally only had to find money to pay for the printing of my flyers and maybe a venue deposit, if we had booked the venue in advance.

This might seem like insanity, and it was. Only now do I understand how my beneficial malfunction was allowing me to live like this. I was compartmentalizing the extreme stress, and I didn't share what I was going through with anyone. I hid it. It was my shame that I was suffering so much, instead of being the successful person everyone who saw me thought I was.

Sure, I had hope that it would pay off, but this was completely uncharted territory here, so there were no guarantees about anything.

One thing that helped was that I loved what I did. I had never been so passionate about anything in my life. I was living the happy hardcore rave dream 24/7. I'd listen to the music all the time, and I especially loved blasting it away while I drove my car.

I had a fan base that worshiped the ground I walked on. This was such a unique sound to them; it was life changing in different ways. My email box was full of fan letters.

That was all fine and good, but Frolic's gotta eat!

I figured I had one more event in me. If there wasn't a turnaround, I would be out of time, and I'd have to make some drastic changes to how I lived and what I would be doing with my time.

It was April of 1998. I had been living in my office since October of 1996, a full year and a half, and was only much poorer than when I started.

Despite the success of Happy2bHardcore, most promoters still had no idea about and no respect for my music, which made the success of Hullabaloo that much more important.

I had to do it myself.

From: KAOS
To: Anabolic Frolic

I saw you spin at Hulla and ever since then you have changed my whole attitude on raving. You have transformed a true techno and house fan to adore the happy hardcore mentality and embrace the PLUR concept!!!!! I know you are probably swarmed with letters every day so I don't expect a response (but that's ok) I look forward to seeing you at Chocolate (only reason that I'm going!) and I love chapter 3. . . . .thank you!

PS: I am not a psycho fan out to get you, I just know that sometimes it is nice to feel appreciated by your fans. Your work does not go unnoticed!

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 22

MAKE OR BREAK

For our fifth event, I assembled our most impressive party yet, always feeling the need to outdo myself. I booked the legendary DJ team of Sy & Unknown, with the return of MC Storm.

The party was called Meltdown, and I booked one of the best venues we'd ever had—the famous Masonic Temple in Toronto. It was a huge concert hall that had featured plenty of the world's best bands when they were still coming up, like the Police.

I took some more inspiration from UK flyer design and added a merchandise section and ordering form to the flyer. It gave the flyer that big promoter feel. I didn't actually have any merchandise to sell, but we listed t-shirts and other things. It looked cool as hell, even if it was a façade.

I had started to sell live audio recordings of our previous parties. Just like with my Frolic Files, I did everything myself: dubbing cassettes all day long, printing labels and covers, manufacturing the tapes. They weren't huge money-makers yet, but at least they motivated me to actually capture each party.

All signs pointed towards a record-breaking event. My only concern now was getting my talent into the country.

Ever since the incident with Hixxy at our first event, I was always paranoid about the DJs getting turned away. The parties

were bigger now. More people would be disappointed if the DJs didn't arrive, and it would reflect poorly on me not to deliver what was promised.

The day of the event rolled up, and I got the call from E-by-gum, who was at the airport.

"The boys are here."

Holy fuck. What a relief. The pressures I was going through were tremendous. But the talent was here, and my venue was secure. Our reputation had only grown.

I couldn't help but skip down the hall again with excitement. I had done all I could. I knew the party itself was going to rock, but would I make any money tonight?

We had a huge lineup stretching around the block to get in. A friend who was working the door would just toss twenty-dollar bills into a cardboard box at his feet as quickly as they were coming in. He could have stuffed his pockets at the same time, and I'd never even know. Things looked good, but I didn't know exactly where we stood.

The venue had recommended a new security company to use. The lead was a guard named Hoss, in a black windbreaker and an awesome mullet. He seemed cool and seemed to care about what I was trying to do. He also seemed to understand that a rave needed a gentle hand. This was a good development for me, connecting with him.

The event was executed perfectly. Not a negative incident to report from security.

My uncle Yuri rolled in around 2 a.m. to see how I was doing, and he took it upon himself to start counting money and putting it into thousand-dollar wads.

"Chris, I'm both extremely proud of you and scared shitless for you," he said.

There was so much money, we had to get rid of it, so Yuri discretely took it with him out of the building for safekeeping.

We hit our 2000-person capacity. After all was said and done, I finally put some cash in my pocket. I felt like I had finally cracked the formula. Like an old business joke, I dealt in volume to keep prices low. I needed thousands of people to make this work at the prices I was charging. It was so difficult to operate a healthy business within the ideals of the scene. I felt great pressure to figure it out.

Looking back, this wasn't a "healthy profit;" it was just the first time I ever had money left over. However, if I were to build into the event a salary to pay myself for the hours of work as a promoter, and also pay myself as talent for my role as Anabolic Frolic, then the event would lose money. I was essentially subsidizing low ticket prices on my own back in some sort of service to rave ideals.

Nor would any of this money compensate me for the last two years of my life, but I felt like I could breathe for the first time since I had started this. I went home to sleep on the floor of my office.

From: aimÈe
To: Anabolic Frolic

Thank you for throwing Hulla parties, they've given me so much more than a fun night with my friends away from my family. Hulla is so much more than just a wicked party. Keep throwing em cuz they're truly special parties. Even though I'm moving away from Toronto in a few months for university, I'm going to continue to come back for Hulla parties… I love em…

that's basically all I had to say… thank you thank you thank you…

—plur—

(Sent by E-mail)

part four

JACKPOT

chapter 23

ROBIN MOVES TO TORONTO

With the infusion of money, I was able to extinguish the fires in my life at the time. All debts were paid, and I was on my feet with a very promising future that wasn't just a dream anymore.

But there was one piece missing—Robin. We had to be together. Toronto was where I was making my success, so there was no leaving. She'd have to come here.

I booked a trip to LA, and Robin was to come back with me. I had to guess that her parents, like anyone's, would have a different preference for their daughter than running off to another country, but they had to concede that she was an adult and free to do what she wanted. To their credit, I don't recall anyone trying to talk her out of it, even if privately they weren't convinced that this would last forever.

Robin knew little about Canada. Even though Toronto is a world-class city, she wasn't expecting to move to a major metropolitan area. She was thinking of something more like what she'd seen in the TV show, *Northern Exposure*. Literally with moose walking in the streets.

There was one other little problem: I was still living in my office. We'd have to stay there together until I found something else. This was going to be a literal trial by fire, but I knew that if we could last through this, we were in good shape.

Robin and I would live together in this 10' by 12' space for two months until we finally moved out into our first apartment together. Truthfully, it was never a problem. We were happy to be together.

From: Sunkist Chris
To: Anabolic Frolic

Hi there!

I just wanted to offer my thanks for doing this mix CD, "Happy 2B Hardcore: Chapter Three". The disc is probably one of the most uplifting, beautiful, enchanting mixes I've heard in a long time. As always, the mixing itself is tight, the track selection varied and excellent, and definitely worth the dollars paid for it. :)

I'd like to add that this is _the_ perfect sun-coming-up CD. I've been listening to it on the bus ride home from parties, and it works every time. I can't thank you enough.

Thanks for putting a smile on my face for the longest time!

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 24

HULLABALOO BIRTHDAY FUNTOPIA 1

In one short year, Hullabaloo had gone from a fringe party featuring unknown DJs and music to a major rave event. The word of mouth was awesome. And why wouldn't it be? We were creating a one-of-a-kind event and atmosphere. Happy hardcore fueled the energy and was itself a great filter of the wrong elements. If you didn't like happy hardcore, you wouldn't be caught dead at Hullabaloo, because it would be your own private hell. The music, the whistles, the costumes—any club-goers who were dabbling in the emerging rave scene wouldn't touch us. That left us with a very high concentration of diehard fans. It only added to the event.

To avoid the scheduling conflict that had happened during our first event, I pushed our anniversary back by one week. The only problem was that we ended up with a scheduling conflict with another major promoter—this one celebrating their third anniversary.

In the end, it didn't matter. Our club venue, which I had once again booked at the last second, would only hold 2000 people, and we hit that number. We wouldn't have had any more room

for anybody. The situation also filtered the crowd and left us with 2000 of the most colorful, enthusiastic Hulla Ravers you could imagine. It was a wall-to-wall fun-fur explosion.

People started approaching me and shouting "Happy Hullabaloo!" to celebrate the anniversary. It became a slogan heard at every Hulla forever after. This was totally coined by the ravers themselves. I had no part in that. Hulla was taking on a life of its own.

Because it was Robin's first Hullabaloo, I gave her no work but only instructions just to enjoy herself. The only problem was that she didn't understand how much work it actually was for me, and she got upset that I wasn't spending more time with her. I would never eat on the day of an event—too many nerves—but I'd drink a one-liter carton of chocolate milk to get me through.

In her immature jealousy, Robin hid and drank my chocolate milk. But immediately after, she felt very guilty and went out to buy me another one. I only bring this story up because she will be mortified that the story made this book. I had the last laugh on this one!

Funtopia 1 was another critical success with the ravers, but it was not a huge financial windfall. Part of the problem was that club owners are often so hard to deal with, always looking out for themselves, and I felt no collaboration from them. I watched the bar staff plead with the owner to charge something normal for water. Instead, she wanted to charge double the going rate, and there was nothing I could do about it. Even though the party was a success, I was so sick of dealing with the management that I left in the morning without even saying goodbye, and I actively avoided them. I gave up on my damage deposit, because I knew they'd not give it back. Damage deposits became like a hidden tax.

I was doing much better than before when I was starving, but you're still talking about three months of work going into each event and about extreme risk.

Robin and I moved out of the office and into a small basement apartment. There was hardly enough money to live on.

This was hardly a get-rich-quick scheme. For all the criticism uneducated people might dish out about rave promoters making *any* money on their events because they feel it's contrary to the peace and love ideals that the scene is founded on, this was some very hard-earned money.

It was a completely different time from that of promotions nowadays, when DJs and promoters literally publicize how much money they are making.

In hindsight, as I write this, I was too concerned with what other people thought of me and was letting those thoughts affect my decision making. I wasn't focused on the value I was creating with these very special events or with my DJ sets. What was that actually worth to someone?

The reality was that if I didn't make this money, there would be no more Hullabaloos, and who would that serve?

From: ANDY
To: Anabolic Frolic

Thank you for bringing the P.L.U.R. crew together once again and making it another wicked, wicked night not to be forgotten. You haven't forgot about the people by giving away free stuff or gone cheap on decorations and lighting. I know the tix have gone up in price as time has passed but I believe the money is used in good way (more DJ's, MC's, lights…) for the peeps that attend the parties. Whatever the price may be the most important thing is that the money goes to the party and not your head… you have that quality and I respect you for that. Not to say that you don't deserve a profit because you do.

one happy hullabaloo raver,

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 25

THE WORLD ELECTRONIC MUSIC FESTIVAL

Hullabaloo had such a tremendous first year that I was approached by the promoters of Destiny, Ryan Kruger and Eryk Sands, about joining their three-day, two-night festival.

When they had launched it in 1995, it was called the World Trance Festival, named after their favored type of electronic music featured at Destiny raves—trance. But they were ready to pivot the festival into something bigger and more, and they were renaming it the World Electronic Music Festival or WEMF.

They had experimented more with house music at their 1997 version, but that was a failure. House fans just aren't into what it takes to sleep in a tent for three days in the dirt, hours away in the middle of nowhere. Hulla Ravers, however, were the most dedicated of ravers. They were the kind that would take that on in a heartbeat.

In the spring of 1998, I met with the Destiny guys at a restaurant to discuss. They started to fill me in on the challenges of putting on an outdoor festival, as compared to a typical indoor rave.

"You need to rent lights, powered by a generator, to light paths. Each one costs $1000, and you need a bunch of them," Ryan said.

"Toilets, but also toilet servicing. Hot food. Water. Twenty-four-hour security," Eryk added.

The budget was immense just with logistical issues. They also faced the same pressures I felt, of not charging too much money even with the incredible scope of everything.

Their offer was simple. I put together a Hullabaloo stage, under my brand, take care of all my sound, lights, staging, talent, airfare, and other expenses. Basically, put on a self-contained Hullabaloo within the gates of WEMF. For that I would get 10% of the gate. It was up to me to make that budget work within the projections of the attendance (at that time ranging from 7,000 to 10,000 people) and hopefully leave enough money for some profit for my effort.

Destiny would make similar deals with other promoters of drum and bass music, techno, and other subgenres of electronica. It really was a celebration of electronica, worthy of the WEMF title.

This was also another demonstration of how much cooperation and synergy there was between Toronto promoters of that era. We all shared a similar vision, and we knew that a rising tide raises all boats.

The previous iterations of the World Trance Festival had been on farmers' fields in the middle of nowhere, with the first year becoming infamous, because it was hit with a tornado on the Friday night, literally destroying a stage and ripping the stage tents out from the ground.

This particular year, 1998, Ryan had found a jewel of a location, Christian Island, located in Georgian Bay, off Lake Huron. Notably, the island is the home of two Indigenous Canadian re-

serves. What this meant was that WEMF would be outside the jurisdiction of typical police and authorities, a positive for any rave. Previous versions of the World Trance Festival had had to rely on the "secret location to be announced" strategy to keep from alerting and rallying the locals about the rave invasion that was going to happen in their backyard. In this case, the location could be promoted and be used as a draw for the event.

But the only way to access the island was by a ferry. This also meant that everything needed for WEMF would have to be brought in by ferry, multiplying by ten an already logistically challenging event.

For the event, I decided to bring some of the people I had gotten to know already, with the return of DJ Spinback and MC Ruff, along with Jimmy J and Vinyltrixta, who had hosted me during my visit to London in 1997.

MC Ruff had fallen in love with Canada during his last visit and was telling everyone back home that they should all move to Canada.

I was able to fill the rest of the weekend with my residents and DJs who had a connection to Hulla. I recruited my dedicated sound and light technician, Cosimo, and he put together a team and the equipment that would be needed to drive our stage.

The flyers hit the street and included beautiful pictures of sandy beaches and sunsets. The location itself was as big an attraction as the talent. The pivot to the World Electronic Music Festival, and the broadening of the music being offered, including the Hullabaloo stage, was a major leap for the festival. It was looking to be an amazing event.

But only two weeks before the event, I received some tragic news. E-by-Gum called me at my office.

"Chris, Ruff has died," he told me.

"What? From what?" I was incredulous.

"He had a heart attack."

James "Ruff" Quaye was only 26 years old. I don't have any more information about what might have happened. Ruff was a special talent, destined to be much bigger than he got. I really enjoyed my time with him here and overseas. He was always there for his friends, of whom I considered myself one. Ruff would never make it back to Canada, the place he wanted to have a new life in.

Services would happen back in London, and some friends and ravers put together a benefit show in his memory, with the proceeds going to his young son, just four years old at the time.

With WEMF only a couple of weeks away, we were forced just to deal with this and move forward.

The preparations for WEMF itself were coming along. Having a local government actually welcome you was a nice change of pace. For the locals, this was a huge opportunity for tourism and to generate some cash. I also got the clear impression that the Indigenous Canadians there loved the idea of thumbing their noses at the provincial authorities.

The weekend of the event arrived, but all the advance teams had started days earlier, setting up big-top tents, toilets, medical stations, vendors, and security teams. I hadn't actually visited the site myself until the Friday when I arrived.

I had rented a minivan, packed with supplies I needed for my stage. I also packed camping gear. There were no hotels on the island, so everyone would be camping on the beach. George was driving, and Robin was with me.

On the road leading to the ferry was a provincial police checkpoint, where they were stopping every car. They may not have jurisdiction on the island, but they did have it over the access to the island.

We were stopped at the blockage, and a cop approached our window.

"Where you headed?" he asked.

"Christian Island," George answered.

"Do you have any illegal drugs?"

"Nope."

"OK, you can go on." And we were done. I wonder what might have happened to someone with the smell of marijuana wafting out of the car.

Driving a little further, we weren't yet close to the ferry dock, but we ran into a mass of humanity. And that was when the shit show started. Thousands of cars had parked along the side of the road, with ravers carrying their weekend supplies on foot going forward. Backpacks with tents, coolers, folding chairs.

There was no way I'd be able to park at this distance and walk on foot to the ferry with all of the supplies I had. It was so disorganized, however, that I didn't even know what to do about it. We decided to press on and keep driving down the road, slowly passing all the people on foot.

The humanity increased as we got closer. Thousands of people waiting in line.

Finally, we got to the ferry terminal. It wasn't much, basically a small parking lot with a gangway to a small ferry. We drove up as close as we could.

"No cars allowed on the island!" shouted one of the employees.

"I'm one of the promoters of the event," I answered.

"Island is closed to cars, you have to come on foot," she answered.

This was simply not possible. I didn't give up.

"I'm one of the promoters; this car is filled with supplies for my stage." I started to panic with worry about what Plan B could be.

Exasperated, she said, "Put your car over there, line it up for the ferry." At least she had caved in.

We lined up our car and waited, and when the ferry arrived, I could immediately see why they didn't want too many cars; this thing could only hold about two dozen. I also saw a sign saying "98 passengers total." This was going to take forever with all those thousands of people, although some enterprising locals had started offering paid "water taxi" service to anyone wanting to give up on the ferry.

Since there were so few cars waiting, we were allowed on the first ferry. The ferry ride itself was quite nice, taking about 15 minutes over the pristine blue waters of Georgian Bay. Meanwhile, I did some quick math in my head about the turnaround time and the amount of people waiting to get over.

We landed on Christian Island. Apparently, the WEMF site was actually on the *other* side of the island, so everyone on foot had to wait again for a yellow school bus to run them back and forth. Another bottleneck and wait for the ravers. This would definitely be an ordeal to endure.

"It's too far to walk," one of the locals told us. Fortunately we had our minivan, but I wondered what a nightmare this would have been had I given it up back on the mainland. We pressed on.

Finally we got to the site and parked in a makeshift parking lot, filled mostly by crew vehicles.

The site was on the edge of the beach, a stretch of several kilometers of pristine white sand and gorgeous blue water, just like the flyer had advertised. In the wooded area behind the beach were several large tents for the music stages. I hunted around and found the familiar faces of Cosimo and his crew. The Hulla stage was set up and ready for business. I had formed a great team that had managed to put all this together even without me being on site. It was a relief.

Robin, George, and I decided then to walk down the beach, where people were setting up their tents, and find a spot. Even

with the mass of people still stuck waiting to get in, there was already an endless view of tents running all along the beach. It took us ten minutes of walking to find a spot where we set up.

As the sun set and darkness formed overhead, revealing a beautiful show of stars, far more than I'd ever see in the city, it was time to get the stages going. The first DJs started. I had scheduled myself for the Friday night, reserving the Saturday night for the guest DJs from the UK, whom I'd have to go pick up at the airport the next day.

With this location in the woods, at the edge of a beach, there was dirt everywhere, kicked up by the thousands of pairs of feet. Already my white t-shirt had turned grey, and my nose was runny from the irritation of the dust.

People continued to arrive all night. I heard word of eight-hour waits to get to the island. Once here, however, everyone seemed to embrace the adventure of it. Unlike modern festival culture and "glamping," there was no promise of VIP amenities at WEMF. Only the promise that you could find a place to pitch a tent—your own tent. And you'd better bring everything you needed.

At 2 a.m., it was time for my set. The tent had filled already in anticipation. There was a film of dirt and dust all over the equipment, which was already affecting the sound quality. Cosimo's guys were constantly swapping gear with backup gear, cleaning the unused gear and getting ready to swap it again.

The needles would jump and skip from the dust, but there was something kind of magical about everyone being in this extreme situation, which we all had to endure to get through. They knew this wasn't ideal for me either, and they would cheer with every successful mix. We were united in our shared ordeal of getting here and being here.

Then my set was over, and I was exhausted. I grabbed a hot dog from a vendor and walked back to my tent to rest—as much rest as you could get, with people and flashlights constantly passing and the steady bass coming from the stages.

Later that morning, as the sun began to rise, the magic of the beach and water really began to hit. It wasn't long, around 7 a.m., before people started to swim in the water. I went in as well. It felt amazing. So clean and clear, so soft. The filth that had accumulated all over my body had a chance to wash away. I was ready to take on the next day.

The event seemed to be running OK, beyond the nightmare of just getting in. I was told there was a problem with the portable toilet company getting access to the island to do their cleanouts of the toilets. I had already noticed "poo mountain" in some of the Porta-Potties and wondered what might happen with no service. I shuddered even to consider it.

I bumped into Amber, one of the vendors I knew, and we commiserated about the experience.

"When I blow my nose it comes out pure black," she reported.

By noon it was time for George and I to make the three-hour run to Toronto Pearson International Airport to pick up my UK guest DJs. Robin would stay behind on the island as my representative. I really was afraid of leaving the island and having to argue my way back on.

As we drove back to Toronto, I received a call from DJ Spinback. They were still at Gatwick Airport in the UK; their flight had been delayed. They should have left hours ago. This meant, best case scenario, that they would be coming in late tonight, barely in time for their sets.

We called back and forth with updates, coming to the realization that their flight was going to be delayed until the next day.

This was a disaster. They were going to miss their sets, and there was no point in their coming.

They were crushed, and I was crushed. After the loss of MC Ruff earlier in the month, this entire trip was seen as a bit of healing closure, honoring his memory by following through with the gig that he wanted so badly. But it was not going to happen—not on this day, anyway.

George and I made the U-turn back to Christian Island. As we drove back, I felt the need to post on the Hullabaloo infoline a message stating that the guests from the UK weren't able to make it, and also that there was an eight-hour wait to get on the island. I didn't want anyone to make the effort to come without full disclosure of the situation.

As we got back to the ferry terminal, my stomach began to turn at the idea of having to argue again to get onto the ferry, at the police checkpoint, the parking, the walking, the filth, the heartbreak of the UK guys not getting in.

But I now noticed something peculiar: there was no police checkpoint on that road. It was wide-open driving.

We approached the road of cars, but there were actually very few people visible. Then we got to the ferry, and there was no one there waiting to get on. It seemed quite dead. They didn't even challenge us on our car.

We got onto the ferry without incident and drove to the site on the other side. I guess everyone had come all at once, on the Friday. The location *was* the big attraction, and everyone had wanted to be there for the entire weekend.

When I revisited my stage, everything was running as it should, just completely covered in dirt. To cover the missing DJs, I planned to play a second set on Saturday and asked DJ Frisky to also cover an extra set.

I would learn that Saturday nights at WEMF are the real party nights. Everyone had dealt with the settling in part and were ready to party. The energy level for my Saturday set seemed ten times that of Friday. I'd make sure to put myself on Saturday nights from now on.

We got through this.

Knowing the bottleneck with the ferry, I strategized with George that we should plan to leave early in the morning. Everything was on cruise control at that point. The remaining DJs knew their spots, and Cosimo was in charge of tearing down his equipment. I didn't have much work to do at that point, anyways.

I could see that some other people had the same idea and were starting to break their tents down at dawn. I saw one peculiar sight of someone walking down the beach with a gas-powered generator, and I wondered why someone would bring something like that here. Then about ten feet behind him, I saw someone carrying an air conditioner unit, the kind you would stick in your bedroom window. Bless them.

We packed up and got into our minivan and made our way to the ferry. There definitely were more and more people making their way out, and I was glad of our decision to leave when we did.

We got on the very next ferry, got to the mainland, and could just feel the weight of the weekend lift.

We were never invited back to Christian Island for WEMF again. Rumors were that the locals didn't like the condition the land was left in after the event, but I am not sure what could be done to lessen the impact of many thousands of people on any piece of land in a remote area like that. It was probably for the best that we never went back, but that was one legendary rave.

From: Retroraver
To: All

So you want to know what Hulla is like? My way to describe Hulla is on your way there you have a certain something that is telling you it's not going to be like anything you've ever been to. That sense of excitement.

You walk into the small section of the theater you are greeted by 27 raver kids covered in candy and you start to realize this won't be like any rave you've been to before, and that's only the beginning.

Then you walk through those double doors and every hair on your body stands straight up and it hits you harder than any pill or drug could ever do.

To see hundreds of smiling faces and tons of bright lights coming from the stage.

You look to the left and the bar girl is playing with a crystal ball like the dude from Labyrinth. Rolling it up and down her hands. You immediately feel the vibe and you realize it's only the beginning of the night.

It's a real live heaven, to say the least.

And every time no matter what happens, you realize the four hour drive listening to your friends bitch about who knows what in the car, getting lost in Toronto, sleeping in the car because you couldn't find a hotel… It was all worth it.

(Posted on the Internet)

chapter 26

NO REST FOR THE WICKED

With six large events a year now, this was turning into a never-ending job—a job I loved, though. Robin and I kept very late hours, often going to bed each morning at 9 a.m. There was no point trying to get back onto a day schedule, because every weekend I'd be up all night DJing and promoting the next Hulla.

The shortened "Hulla" was a term affectionately conceived by the ravers. I actually resisted it for some time, referring only to our full name, Hullabaloo. But in time, I had to accept the brevity of Hulla and that it was a positive that people were so into us. It also lent itself to a new term—Hulla Raver. I can't think of a single other rave promotion that had its patrons so identified with the promotion. We had some very enthusiastic fans.

Local stores would report selling out of whatever fun-fur color our flyer happened to feature. A blueish flyer meant a run on blue fun-fur.

Promoting was the more difficult thing. It was such an important aspect that I couldn't risk farming it out to someone else in case they'd flake off. We learned that the best way to hand out flyers was to be positioned at the exits of any raves happening in the weeks leading up to ours. There was no point getting there before 4 a.m., so we'd usually arrive around then and stay until

the party ended and the last ravers had exited, often past 9 a.m. on Sunday morning.

Then we'd usually go have breakfast with a group of other promoters. At the time, Toronto had a pretty established and mature promoter scene. A handful of us were throwing the same number of events all year long, and we settled into our regular dates. We'd see each other every weekend, and there definitely was some camaraderie and mutual respect amongst us. We all seemed to work with one another for the greater good of our rave scene.

That was actually unique to Toronto, for the most part. Through my travels as a DJ, I got to experience raves in many North American cities, and the situation was pretty cutthroat and, to a certain extent, childish. Promoters would pull stunts on each other, like calling in bomb threats, alerting the fire department, throwing piles of flyers in the trash, or spreading rumors about talent not coming. On the whole, we had none of that. I think that was a big reason that for a time, Toronto became the biggest rave city in the world.

Major events every weekend, attended by several thousand people, with cooperation amongst the promoters and a nice variety of music styles supported—heck, Hullabaloo did not just survive here but thrived here. Where else might that have happened in those early days?

There was also a cottage industry that supported the thriving rave scene. The free rave-specific monthly *Tribe Magazine* had 50,000 readers, and there were lots of record and rave clothing stores and dozens of ticket outlets throughout the greater Toronto area.

Then there were things like the Toronto Raver Info Project, or TRIP. This was conceived and started by a registered nurse named Kim Stanford. Its main objective was harm reduction about drugs and sex for all the teenagers that were coming into the rave scene.

While I wasn't a drug user myself, I knew there was no point telling anyone not to do something. Young people need to learn on their own, so let's keep them as safe as possible while they do so.

TRIP was funded by a grant from Toronto Health, enough to support one organizing staff member and pay for an office. From there, TRIP would recruit volunteers, train them to work the booth, and do outreach work. There was never a shortage of volunteers, and they did great work.

I gave TRIP a booth for free at all of my events and supported them any way I could.

There was also a cottage industry of rave vendors who would come out to each event every weekend and sell their wares. These could be anything from freezies to smart drinks, mixtapes, glow sticks, t-shirts, jewelry, and anything else they could come up with. It just seemed that there was a huge influx of effort and hours going into supporting our rave scene from all angles.

I was a cog in a much larger machine.

Around this time, I started to experience people doing double-takes when I was in public. I could be at the clothing store with Robin looking for new jeans, and the sales staff would light up.

"Oh my god, Anabolic Frolic is in our store!"

I'd be perusing the message forum on our website, the HullaBoard, and I would see posts like "I just saw Anabolic Frolic at Square One Shopping Centre."

I fully acknowledge that my "celebrity" was a mere taste of what a pop star would experience, but already it was getting uncomfortable to be losing the anonymity of doing things like buying clothes.

I became very uncomfortable being a guest at social gatherings, realizing that everyone in the room knew who I was, but I didn't know them. It felt really odd, and I didn't know what to do about this sort of imbalance, where they seemed to know all about

me already. Usually there was a handful of the same questions everyone wanted to ask. This didn't lend itself to normal conversation, and I found I would just withdraw from the discomfort of it. Even now, all these years later, those behaviors I built then are still with me and I have a lot of difficulty being in a room of people, even if, now, no one cares about me.

From: Jen
To: Anabolic Frolic

Hey, I just wanted to say thank you for an awesome party. I am thoroughly impressed with the level of organization and competency that you all showed at Hulla. Seriously, being a little jaded and cynical of the scene I must admit that this party has definitely lightened my view.

BTW Frolic you kick ass; not only with your spinning but also with your ability to throw a phat party that makes jaded kids happy again. Thanks.

(Posted on the Internet)

chapter 27

YEAR 2

After our recent successes, it was time to plan the next Hulla, and again I challenged myself about how I was going to outdo our last event.

Despite the stability provided by having a locked-in venue, there was immense pressure from the ravers to do new things and find new places to do them in. So I started once again with no venue booked and continued my venue search while the party was being promoted.

The flyer was designed for an event called Electric Dreams. Talent from overseas was booked, including DJ Vibes—one of my original mixtape inspirations.

Flyers were out, talent was booked, tickets were being sold. But once again I found myself without a venue. A large club by the airport called The Newz had contacted me about a possible booking, but it wasn't ideal for one reason. They were still trying to revive their club nights.

Worse, on our date, they had booked a big night of live acts and a "live to air" radio promotion. Gordon, the owner, would rent to me, but I couldn't have the main room until 1 a.m.

The main room would hold 2000 people, easy. They also had a back garage that I could use as a secondary room that would hold several hundred people. There was also a restaurant we could use.

Not having the use of the main room was a real problem, though, so I continued my search. The Wednesday before the party, I still had nothing. I was pacing around my apartment, unable to sit still with stress. We had already sold nearly 2000 tickets, and all my previous spaces were no longer available. I had painted myself into a corner, so I had no choice but to make The Newz work. I went to see Gordon on the Thursday to make the deal.

He would run his club night until 1 a.m., and until then, we'd use the back garage and restaurant. I also booked a large outdoor tent that would hold 500 people, but it connected to the main room, so it was still no use to us until later in the night.

I figured we could squeeze a thousand people into our available space until we took over the main room. I also calculated that most of our patrons wouldn't arrive until midnight onwards, so it could work out. We'd stagger the door, slowly letting them in, until 1 a.m. when everyone could get in. I scheduled DJs for both the garage and restaurant to start the party and for 1 a.m. in the main room.

It wasn't the prettiest plan, but it seemed workable and was the only solution I had in front of me. We went ahead with the plan.

But Murphy's law came into effect that night—everyone showed up at 10 p.m. We had over 2000 people crowding around the restaurant entrance door in a huge mob. Worse, though, because of the plan to have less than 1000 people in the venue before 1 a.m., security had staggered their arrival times. So we only had a skeleton security team to start at 10 p.m., not nearly enough for crowd control of 2000 people. It was chaos.

The only thing saving my ass was that this was a Hulla Raver crowd. They wanted in, but they weren't there for trouble.

Because I had projected the capacity of the venue at 3000 people with everything open, we had announced earlier that there would be cash tickets available at the door in addition to the 2000

tickets we had presold. Hulla was the hottest event in town, and everyone wanted in. It was a mass of humanity.

Worse, I had charter buses arriving from out of town. An entrepreneurial raver would hire a bus and sell tickets to our rave for 50+ ravers to come from five hours away. The bus had arrived, she needed the tickets from me, and I was about to lose my mind.

Things went from bad to worse. Police had noticed the huge crowds outside and were now investigating. You can imagine that the police hate large uncontrolled crowds. But we had nowhere to put them yet. The police didn't care and were threatening to shut the whole event down if there was any trouble.

Making a nightmare even worse was that the club goers for the club night were coming out drunk and starting fights. The police didn't distinguish their crowd from ours. It was looking bad.

The police then called the fire department to inspect the occupancy permits of the venue, to see if it could hold this many people in the first place. Fire trucks arrived, along with police cruisers and crowds of thousands of impatient ravers. It's one thing to wait in line for hours, but when it's clear it's an uncontrolled mess, you're not going to be happy.

At 1 a.m., I went inside the club to see what was happening. There was still a singer onstage! They hadn't even begun the transition yet. I was in real trouble; I don't think I had been more stressed in my life.

The fire department made their inspections, and everything checked out. They inspected the large big top tent that was sitting in the parking lot, and that checked out too.

Finally the club night ended, and they kicked everyone out. I saw my main audio tech, Cosimo, onstage patching cables as quickly as possible to the turntables, sweat pouring down his face. This guy was killing himself for me. At that moment, I knew I'd never work with another sound company again.

I could see a bunch of ravers pressed against the gate that separated the main room from the back garage. They wanted in.

Finally, we had sound, DJ Frisky took the decks as our first main room DJ, and the gate opened. We started letting everyone in the main entrance. Fuck, we were going to pull this off!

Within 30 minutes, the crowd outside was now in, the fire department left, and the police left, now that the uncontrolled crowd was now in control. The party had begun.

I had originally been scheduled to play before our guest, DJ Vibes, but with the chaos of the evening, I swapped sets with DJ Frisky and would play my set at 7 a.m.

One look inside, and you could tell the party was going off like it never had before. I don't know if the chaos of the first part of the night meant a lot of pent-up energy, but everyone was just having it now. The Newz was working out well as a venue. Its main room was the biggest main room we had utilized yet. Wall-to-wall people just going wild.

Standing by the main entrance, I could also see that the chill-out tent was being utilized. As crowded as it was inside, it was good that people had a chance to get some air. But something else was happening in there.

I would hear someone shout "Happy Hullabaloo!" and then screams and several hundred whistles would follow. A few minutes later it would happen again, and again throughout the night. Something magical was happening.

I had a large sense of relief by the time my bumped 7 a.m. slot arrived. We had made it through the night. The place was still going crazy. I had never DJ'd so late in the night before, but it might as well have been 1 a.m., because the place was still packed and electric.

I started with a new track I had recently acquired, called Distant Skies, which would eventually be the lead track of Happy-

2bHardcore Chapter 3. The Newz was radiating with energy and love. It was an exciting time. It was palpable that we were breaking new ground, and everyone who was a part of it knew it.

It also became clear at that moment that I had become the main attraction of Hullabaloo. I was in the unique position of being a big-named DJ, made famous from the Happy2bHardcore CDs and a visible face of a company that was changing the lives of those who attended. Virtually everyone's introduction to happy hardcore was coming from those CDs or from attending a Hullabaloo itself.

Almost every other rave promotion was operated by some anonymous promoter, who most people considered shifty or crooked. In my case, I was seen as a shining star.

The sun was up when my set was over. The party ran till 9 a.m., and ravers were all over the neighborhood, lying in the grass and sunshine. There was no urgency to go anywhere.

What started as one of my worst events ended up as one of the best. Getting over 2700 people that night set a new attendance record for us. If it wasn't obvious to everyone before, it was clear now that Hullabaloo was becoming a giant of a rave promotion. It stood alone with its mix of music, fashion, and culture. Its fan base was rabid, and at the centre of it, one man, who everyone was watching.

From: Will W. Chang
To: Chris Frolic

Re: Hullabaloo lawyer?

Intrigued by the title? Here's the deal Chris. I'm 25, I've been going to raves since I was about 21, I absolutely love happy hardcore, I had an incredible time at Electric Dreams … and I'm a lawyer at a big Bay Street law firm.

I know that Hullabaloo's pretty much a one-man show. I also know that, although you've had your share of problems and criticisms, for the most part, yours are arguably the most respected raves that Toronto has to offer.

That being said, I'm writing to offer you my services if you should ever be in need of high-powered legal help. I'm a corporate, commercial and real estate lawyer myself but I work at a completely full service law firm that can provide any kind of legal assistance.

Just thought I'd pass that on. Please understand where I'm coming from. I'm making this offer as a favour to you because I want to do my best to help the rave scene, especially the happy hardcore scene, stay alive and healthy. Bay Street firms are extremely expensive and very few small companies can afford them. I might be able to help you out with reduced fees and other things. Just a thought.

I figured if you ever did need a lawyer, you'd probably want to talk to someone who understands what you and Hullabaloo are all about. Anyways, hold on to this email like it's my business card. And feel free to give me a call or drop me an email if you need the help of a law firm.

Until then, keep up the good work,

(Sent by E-mail Oct 18, 1998)

chapter 28

INTRODUCING THE HULLABOARD

It's weird now to imagine a time before the internet or before message board communities on the internet, but in the mid-nineties, that was the case. Hullabaloo was one of the first raves to have any sort of web presence at all. You could at least come and see the flyer online, but the web address was archaic: http://web.idirect.com/—chris/hullabaloo.html

That literally was the address. Domains weren't easily registered by individuals then. It would be a year before www.hullabaloo-raves.com (no longer online) would appear, and years later, the much shorter www.hulla.info (which is still online, as of this writing).

But as awkward as it was, we had a website. Most promoters then were still using only a phone number and printed flyers.

Better still, we had a message forum, one of the first anywhere. Ravers were suddenly given a voice to come and talk about the events and meet each other. This emerging community would give Hulla even more strength in the coming months and years.

From: basic
To: All

What makes Hulla so much more special than anything that has come before it is the community that has been built over the years. Hulla is more than just DJs spinning music. Anyone with some money and time could book the exact same DJ's that Hulla brings in. But without the community backing everything up, the whole experience that is Hullabaloo is completely different.

Hullabaloo goes beyond what has happened in the confines of its many parties. So many people have forged lifelong friendships, whole groups of friends and had their life courses change. Without the online community, no matter which DJ's were brought in or which tracks would be played, Hullabaloo would have died a long time ago. Pretty much a collapse would have happened before the online only promotion of Hulla-For Those Who Know. That is what makes that party so legendary to so many people, not a single flyer printed. If that party had fizzled, Hulla would have been over. But it didn't, and that was largely because of the HullaBoard. It completely reignited Hulla.

Thanks for building such a wonderful community that I and many others have benefited from for so long.

(Posted on the HullaBoard)

chapter 29

FIRING ON ALL CYLINDERS

There were a lot of hard lessons learned at Electric Dreams, and I was determined to get it right from now on. I didn't have a lot of venue options available to me, but The Newz was available, and this time, Gordon the owner would give us the complete building for the whole night for a few thousand dollars more. I had to take it, even though it would be preferable to keep things fresh. There had to be some rationality involved, and waiting for the last second to book a venue was definitely irrational behavior.

With the venue booked in advance, I knew what capacity I had to work with. I decided to set it at just a little bit less than Electric Dreams and give it a bit of breathing room at 2500 people. I then knew what the next step had to be. I had to sell all tickets in advance and not offer any at the door. I couldn't risk having several hundred or thousands of people outside waiting to get in.

Every other promoter would usually only sell a partial number of tickets in advance and sell the rest at the door for $5–$10 more and make tens of thousands extra because of it. But for the sake of a smooth event, I had to give up that potential money intake. All available tickets were going to be put on the street at the

usual advanced ticket price and no more. In hindsight, I realize I was not following the Business 101 philosophy of supply and demand—tickets should be priced at what the market is willing to pay for the value you are creating. If you're selling out an event, then tickets are arguably priced too low. But I cared about my reputation and didn't want to be perceived as a parasite.

The events were profitable, technically, and the profits were a huge leap over the terrible wages I had been working with a year earlier, but I had only moved out of my office and into a basement apartment I was renting. Basically, I had only switched from being technically homeless.

Something about the ideals of the scene was keeping me from profiting properly, forget about being a parasite. These things involved tremendous work and risk. I had created something new that had never existed before, yet I was hobbling myself by keeping the profit so modest.

Chalk it up to youth and inexperience.

I felt such pressure to balance the business and entrepreneurial aspect of rave promoting with the ideals of the scene. I also wasn't taking into account that for most people at the event, their ticket was the cheapest part of their night. There was travel, parking, gas, water and other consumables, eating out, and then, for some or many of them, the unmentionables, which would be illicit drugs.

It doesn't make sense, looking back, that the nucleus of all that—the reason everyone was there—would be the smallest expense of the night. But I didn't want to rock the boat and was committed to maintaining the status quo with ticket prices.

The other big lesson I learned from Electric Dreams was that cops *hated* seeing crowds outside. If they were inside and under control, the cops couldn't care less. So from that event on, I came up with a door strategy that would get everyone in as soon as possible. That meant a full security detail in place from the get-go, six to ten door searchers. But more importantly, I would start each

Hullabaloo one hour before the advertised door time. An unbilled DJ would get an opportunity to warm up the decks, and we'd get the line inside before it had a chance to grow.

We knew, and my patrons knew, that the party was going to be a sellout, so there was no need to manufacture hype by leaving a crowd lined up outside. Expediency was key.

Since this was my first time returning to a venue, I was also able to improve on other things. We brought back our chill tent, but we added lights. There was also a hot dog vendor inside the tent.

Everything that could be fine-tuned was. We beefed up the lighting system at the club and even brought in a licensed pyrotechnician to rain sparks from the stage.

Three days before the Saturday of the event, tickets had sold out completely. In the history of Toronto raves, no promoter had ever done that before. Phones were going crazy with everyone looking for tickets. The legend that was Hullabaloo would only increase. It really was the hottest ticket in town.

Selling all the tickets in advance also gave me the cash I needed to pay everyone. I started the policy of paying all talent as they arrived. Usually, DJs are left trying to chase down a promoter after their set, to get paid. Everything I could think of to smooth the event out, we implemented.

Rush Hour was another Hulla classic. The Hulla rave formula was being perfected. I consider it the first of a string of perfect raves that we held.

BOOK BONUS:

See footage of Anabolic Frolic's set from Rush Hour. Go to: https://www.anabolic-frolic.com/bonus/

Our burgeoning online message board spun off its first message board meet-up at Rush Hour. It's funny to think of a time when the internet meet-ups at a party would only be a handful of people.

Shortly after Rush Hour, I got the phone call from Moonshine about Happy2bHardcore Chapter 3. By this point, I could feel the weight of the series on me. It wasn't just a compilation of music but a historical record.

I was also much more seasoned as a DJ by the time Chapter 3 came around. Hulla was now huge, and I had a ton of experience playing this music to large crowds. In my opinion, Chapter 3 really started to showcase a true style and elevated the series. It also featured some of the biggest happy hardcore songs of all time, including Eye Opener and Shooting Star.

When I listen to them now, I can feel that maturity as a DJ coming through the mix—far beyond just beat matching two songs together. Moonshine reported to me that with each release, the previous volume would sell more. It was a true evergreen series and a cash cow.

While I was happy to DJ anywhere asked, I began to learn the hard lessons that when you are too friendly and accommodating, it bites you in the ass. I frequently wouldn't be paid, because the promoters would tell me they lost money—mostly because they were well intentioned ravers, not business people.

That would also flare up in what DJ equipment was there; decisions made to save money meant I was playing on less than ideal set-ups.

One particular rave was so hot and steamy, the needles of the turntables would just slide across the film of moisture that had formed on the records. I had to resort to playing one record from beginning to end on one turntable, because the second became unusable. Like "punk rock," when dealing with a hardcore under-

ground rave, you are so underground, you revel in the adversity of the situation. The ravers cheered for the "fuck it" attitude and for my just dealing with it instead of being a prima donna.

As a final capper, the *Tribe Magazine* year-end awards in 1998 awarded Hullabaloo "Newest Cult." We deserved it.

From: Brian
To: Anabolic Frolic

Hi,

I live in Vancouver with my wife and a baby on the way but grew up in Toronto. At the moment I'm shacked up in Toronto at the Doubletree Hotel by Pearson airport. I've been here for about two months doing some training at the airport (airline pilot). There's literally nothing by this hotel and it's pretty depressing lol…

I went for a cold, windy walk down Carlingview the other day and stopped in front of a dumpy building with a bar and a Coffee Time in it. I froze and stared at the parking lot because, for some distant reason like a long forgotten dream, the layout was familiar to me. I stared at the building but didn't recognize it (Arizona's bar and grill). I started to walk away and turned around for one last look but not at the building…at the parking lot and then tsunami of nostalgia came crashing over me. I realized that in a past life, I stood here sweaty and steaming at four in the morning in phat pants and a fishing hat when it was Newz nightclub over 20 years ago lol.

I had my earphones in and immediately looked up Eye Opener on YouTube. For about 6 minutes I was transported back to that night: dancing until my legs wouldn't move anymore, blowing my whistle until I was half deaf, signing sticker books and feeling a couple thousand people taking part in the same beautiful love for a few hours. I know we all have vast-

ly different lives now and a lot of years have gone by but the memory of those times still brings a smile to my face and warms my heart. Just seems right to send this note. Hulla was magic. Thanks for making it happen… :o)

PLUR

(Sent by E-Mail, 2019)

chapter 30

ROBIN GETS SICK

Robin moved up here in May of 1998 and had been living in Toronto with me for several months by this time. Things were generally great between us. We found a new apartment and got out of that office, and we both enjoyed being around each other. We were inseparable.

Robin would come out with me to promote each Hulla that would happen, but for the most part, I hadn't delegated many responsibilities to her. Being an American, she was only a visitor and had no way to work a job or even attend school if she wanted to.

We had considered the idea of getting married on paper, even going so far as to get the marriage licence from City Hall, but I couldn't go through with it. I felt that we wouldn't be able to pretend the marriage was paper only, and I wasn't ready to get married for real.

I was making enough money to support both of us, so it didn't matter too much, and we just enjoyed our time together.

As that summer turned to fall, though, something appeared to be wrong with Robin. She was having a hard time getting out of bed, and she would cry a lot, sometimes crying herself to sleep while rocking back and forth. She just felt terrible. It's clear now

that her depression was coming on in full, but we didn't know what was happening at the time.

Very quickly, things got worse, and Robin started having panic attacks. Sometimes she'd have multiple panic attacks a day, and every one was exhausting for us both.

Robin had no health coverage, but a local doctor's office allowed us to pay cash to see the doctor. After a ten-minute interview, the doctor gave Robin a prescription for the antidepressant Paxil and 100 tranquilizers.

Things felt out of control. The Paxil would take weeks to start working, even if it did. Before long, Robin was taking the tranquilizers daily, to cope with the panic attacks and depression, and spending most of the day in bed. I wasn't sure what more I could do for her.

The night of Rush Hour, Robin could barely stand her dark thoughts and took some tranquilizers at the party. She passed out onstage, lying on some equipment behind the DJs. E-by-gum got upset at her for "getting drunk" (as he assumed) and missing her own party. No one had any idea how sick Robin was.

From: KB
To: Anabolic Frolic

I'm writing you this email, half expecting not to get a reply back, but I'm willing to try anyway. I just want you to know how much I thank you.

I had been immensely depressed for a long time and come so close so many times to killing myself, I wasn't even alive…your music lifted my soul and freed my spirit and I thank you for that. Thanx to you and your musical inspiration, I can once again be the huge small time raver I once was and more.

Thanx to you I am happy again…you're my "hero". I know it sounds corny, but you are. I hope to hear from you. And if I don't, I'm glad I got to finally tell you how I feel. Thanx a lot Frolic, I hope to catch you live sometime in the future. Bye!

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 31

1999

Selling out 2500 tickets with days to go meant only one thing: we had to take it bigger. As we started 1999, I had my sights set on our biggest venue yet—a convention centre near the airport called the International Centre. It wasn't cheap, but it would give us room for 5000 people. In hindsight, this was an incredible gamble, but it was clear that the entire rave scene was growing. There were lots of new faces every week, and Hullabaloo was on a hot streak.

Besides the high rent of the International Centre they also requested I get a two million dollar liability policy. There was no choice in the matter, so it was just something I had to accept. It did feel better to have the coverage, though, and it would be something I'd have in place for the rest of our events. I wasn't really worried about anything crazy happening, but what if someone slipped and broke their arm? That's exactly what you have insurance for. It was another step in being a legit organization.

The International Centre was booked and contracted as the first step. Because of its impressiveness, we took the unusual step of including the venue information on the flyer itself. That alone gave the event an epic feel, and people were really excited about the size. The International Centre was also not used much, so it had the fresh virgin feel that ravers loved about venues.

We had to have a large security detail, and the venue wanted us to hire some paid-duty police officers. This was the first time that would happen.

Our flyers debuted at a 1998/1999 New Years event. I was booked to play the midnight set at a Hulla-inspired event called DIY, held by a bunch of Hulla super fans in an indoor skate park. I had always wanted to spin a midnight set on New Years and finally got my chance, playing for my biggest fans.

Robin was too sick to come out that night. Her first New Years with me in Toronto, and she was tranquilized out by 9 p.m. I had to leave her at home while I went out to spin.

For Big Top, I did the same thing and sold all tickets in advance. Hulla was never the biggest promotion—after all, we followed a niche format—but we were definitely in the big leagues.

Even with the large jump in capacity, all tickets sold out completely in advance once again.

Everything was planned, set, and ready to go, except for one thing. I didn't call the police to arrange pay-duties.

Even though the venue had been booked as the first step, I put off calling them. I put it off some more, and week after week would pass. Suddenly it was literally the Friday before our event, happening tomorrow. The venue had made pay-duty police part of the contract, and I had procrastinated on it right to the eve of the event. What the heck was I doing? I was completely going to screw up my own biggest show.

My beneficial malfunction was not so beneficial this time. I was afraid of the police; I feared making the call. So I had avoided it. It had been compartmentalized for all those months.

I had no idea what the police might do if I didn't call. It was in my contract with the venue; I wasn't sure what would happen if I didn't. Finally at 3 p.m. on Friday, I called the local police station near the venue.

"Hi, I'm doing an event at the International Centre this Saturday and need to arrange some pay-duty officers."

"Yeah, we've got you on the calendar here. It's all good for next week."

I realized they were talking about a rave happening the week after mine. They were mistaken.

"Uh, no, I'm talking about tomorrow, February 9."

"Tomorrow?! There's nothing scheduled for tomorrow. I don't know if anything can be arranged in time. You're going to have to tell the International Centre there are no police available."

Fuck. I had fucked myself. I had probably fucked myself worse than if had I done nothing and they weren't even wise to my party. There had to be a way out of this.

"Yes, I understand this is last second, but is there anything that can be done?"

"Well, normally we would have a meeting with you, meet you face to face, and go over the event. I don't even know if there's anyone available to work it now."

"I can come down there right away if that will help."

"OK, well, why don't you come down and we'll see if anything can be worked out. Ask for Sergeant MacCrossin."

Holy shit, maybe there's hope! I jumped in my car and sped to that division station.

I arrived at the station at 4:30 p.m. and asked for the sergeant.

Sergeant MacCrossin was a friendly enough bloke, and considering how last-second my request was, downright accommodating. He had lined up four officers and one sergeant for our event the next day. Pay these officers in cash at the start of the night, and I was allowed to continue with my event. If there was no deal, apparently I would be shut down.

MacCrossin conceded, "I wouldn't want to be one of five cops dealing with 5000 people if something happened." But I got my pay-duties, and we were good to go.

The next day, I went to the airport to pick up my talent, which included DJ Slipmatt. Slipmatt is referred to as the godfather of happy hardcore in the UK, being one of the early pioneers of the early nineties to launch it forward.

His mixtape was one of the first I ever owned, and his countless mixes and vinyl releases I owned made him the DJ most influential on my own career. Of all the talent I would ever book, he was the only one that gave me a genuine thrill when meeting him for the first time. Having Slipmatt at Hullabaloo was like a cherry on top of everything.

Slipmatt was very influential on my own style of DJing. He was not one for tricks but just a steady flow of beats and energy from his decks to the crowd. I also admired the way he would engage the crowd. Too many DJs I would see over the years wouldn't even look up at the dance floor. I can remember attending a rave with a big DJ being in the middle of the dance floor and not seeing him look out at the crowd once. I hated it, and I knew I would never do that myself.

Slipmatt wasn't about theatrics or antics while he spun; he would simply look out and gaze upon the crowd while they danced, and he would smile and bob his head in acknowledgement. It's something I always strove to do. Making eye contact with someone who is having the time of their lives is a thrill.

Also booked for this show was a good mate of Slipmatt's, DJ Slam, along with MC Charlie B, who was a known party animal. All three were known to be some wild partiers. I had heard stories of TVs being thrown out of hotel windows.

As we left the airport, Slipmatt pulled a bottle of vodka from his bag that he had bought at the duty-free shop and took a shot straight from the bottle. I knew I was going to have my hands full.

I checked the boys into their hotel and gave them cab money and directions to the venue. I just hoped they would make it.

From: Bottle "T"
To: Anabolic Frolic

I just wanted to tell you that it makes me very happy to know that there is still someone out there willing to throw parties for the party kids. I have been partying for 7 years now, in the past 2 years I've been to 8 big parties, 6 have been Hullas!!!!!!

Your parties keep me coming back because, there's room to dance (Oh my god) everyone is smiling, and besides I feel like a kid again when I'm there. I will be celebrating my 21 year as a kid on the oct 9 show as my B-day is on the 7th.

Thanks!!

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 32

FRIENDSHIP CREW

For the most part, and certainly for the first few years, Hullabaloo was a one-man show. From the earliest conception of each event to booking the talent, promoting, wrangling talent, executing the event itself, paying everybody, distributing tickets, and collecting the money, it was all on me and was a full-time job. Though obviously I would contract out certain aspects, such as sound and lights and security, and I would pay a friend to work the door, handling tickets.

Part of the reason was starting with so little money that I had nothing left over to hire anyone to help me out, so I did as much as possible myself. The other part was my beneficial malfunction of extreme self-reliance and being afraid even to ask for help.

I would run to the novelty supplier to buy the whistles we needed, open the boxes, open the packaging, and lay them out on a table before the doors opened. Ravers would come in and pick up a whistle on their way to the party. It wasn't perfect, but it's the way I did it.

After our first year, I was approached by a cute little raver girl named Jenny. I recognized her from seeing her pretty much at every Hulla. She was always dressed up and was a pioneer in the emerging candy raver fun-fur fashions.

She had an idea. How about she organized a group of dedicated volunteers to do things such as hand out the whistles on the way in and help decorate the venue? They would also hand out drinks and candy and just add some friendliness to the party. She called it the Hulla Friendship Crew.

I thought it was an awesome idea. And in the span of a couple of Hullas, it went from idea to well-organized machine. These kids weren't just showing up to hand out whistles, they spent several weeks in their preparations, making matching costumes and creating decorations for the party. If they asked for anything at all from me, it was for some of their out-of-pocket costs to be covered. Most would still even buy a ticket to the event.

The Hulla Friendship Crew would become a defining part of Hullabaloo. What other rave had greeters at the door welcoming you to the party with a "Happy Hullabaloo!" and then placing a whistle around your neck on the way in? Most ravers were just used to their money being taken away on the way in. You couldn't help but smile, and it made Hulla that much more special and unique compared to any other rave.

The faces of the Friendship Crew would change over the years as some lost interest and others picked up the flag, but they would be an integral part of every Hullabaloo until the very end.

From: Luka
To: Anabolic Frolic

Hello Chris,

I don't usually e-mail you or talk to you much, but I've been thinking about this for a while now, and I just wanted to say thank you.

To keep this short, most of the positive things that have happened to me during the last year have in some way been linked to Hullabaloo, your creation. Thanks to your parties and, of course, your message board I've met some of the nicest people, and done some of the most fulfilling and most satisfying things ever. Things I never thought possible. I really don't want this to sound cheesy, or like I'm kissing ass, but I think you really make a lot of people's lives a whole lot better. For me Hullabaloo really changed my life. Oh, that sounds lame.

Basically, I just wanted to say thank you for all you have done for us, and especially THANK YOU for creating a platform (the Hulla board). Oh, and thanks for being one of the few promoters that consistently throws quality events.

Damn, this all sounds kind of silly, but thank you for making us smile.

:)

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 33

BIG TOP

I arrived at the International Centre around 6 p.m., a few hours yet before we opened. The sound crews had been there all day, setting up two impressive stages—our biggest yet, and they had to be built from scratch; there was no in-house system to start with.

I had also hired a bouncy castle company to set up some inflatables and add to the festivities.

The Friendship Crew was already there, unpacking thousands of whistles to give away. The vendors were arriving to set up their booths. And I had a weird feeling—calmness. Normally at this point, I'd be running around like a chicken with its head cut off. But because the venue had had to be paid for in full a month earlier, there wasn't anything for me to do. Everything was taken care of.

I had hired four shuttle buses to shuttle ravers from in front of Union Station to the airport. This was where my first hiccup of the night came. Security at the station was going ballistic, dealing with several hundred ravers loitering outside. They wanted them gone. Finally, the first batch of shuttle buses arrived, and the ravers streamed on. The only problem was that these buses weren't mine; they'd been hired for a competing rave held the same night at our previous venue, The Newz, which was also by the airport.

The kids on the bus all told the driver that there was a mistake, and she was to take them to the International Centre, so she and her partner bus driver did.

Upon arrival of the buses, I hopped on board to pay them their fee. In cash. The buses left again to circle back to Union Station. About fifteen minutes later, four more buses appeared. This was too quick to have been a round trip already, and I began to figure out what had happened. These four buses were my buses, and the two previous buses had basically been commandeered by the Hulla Ravers from the other rave that was happening. I guess through their bus CB radios, the two bus companies were able to communicate and figure out what had happened. But not until my competitor's buses had already done a couple of runs for me.

My competitor would later blame me for bribing his buses away and stealing several hundred of his patrons, but that was impossible, because Hulla was an advanced ticket only event. Plus, it was unlikely that the crowd he was looking to attract would just wander into a full-on happy hardcore rave. No one was going to his rave, buses or not.

My actual bus drivers even got my money back from the other company, so they were paid in full, and I wasn't out anything extra from the mishap. This would be the end of my relationship with the charter buses I had used for the last few events, however, as the drama that ensued between the companies was not worth their trouble. They didn't want my business anymore.

Despite being a huge jump in the size of the event for me, Big Top went off just like every Hulla before it. The vibe was intense. Every single person there, it seemed, was fully immersed in the Hullabaloo atmosphere. There were no tourists. Much is said about big parties having poor vibes compared to smaller ones, but I truly felt that all we had done was take our smaller events and multiply the numbers, and it only intensified the experience.

When it was time for my 5 a.m. set, the crowd was ready to thank me for this experience. It was an unusual position I found myself in—not just a talent, but the facilitator of an entire experience.

The night ran amazingly smoothly, overall. The only other mishap of the night was that around 7 a.m., a raver named Tommy had been dancing on the speakers and fell off and landed on the lighting board, knocking the system out. The lighting tech was furious and led Tommy to meet with me in the lobby, so we could figure out what to do.

The lighting board was worth a few grand. We didn't know whether it was broken or not. I knew Tommy from seeing him regularly at other raves and Hullas. I knew he wasn't a bad person and that accidents happen. The lighting tech said we should get his info. I responded, "That's OK, I know who he is." Tommy seemed to slump down even lower at the thought that he had let me down.

Twenty minutes later, I saw Tommy leaving.

"Sorry for ruining your party," he said softly.

I told him that it was OK; apparently, all they had to do was reset the board, and everything was working again. That did little to cheer his spirits as he walked out.

I find this story funny now, because within a year, Tommy and I would become very close friends, but that was one of our first interactions with each other. At the next Hulla, some ravers posted a sign by the speakers that said "No Tommys Allowed."

I thought the police that night did a good job, and I had no problem with their request to be there. They kept a presence at the entrance of the building, like you would expect to see at any concert, and they would occasionally walk around inside. I spoke quite a bit with the sergeant that night, and he was quite impressed with the whole party. He had nothing against kids having a good

time, and he wasn't going to label the whole group as rotten just because some were trouble. So even though they made a couple of drug busts, it didn't reflect poorly on the night as a whole. It was 5,000 people, after all.

We ran till the late hour of 9 a.m., the last time we would ever go so late.

BOOK BONUS:

See footage of Anabolic Frolic's set from Big Top. Go to: https://www.anabolic-frolic.com/bonus/

Big Top made me feel like I had accomplished my dream of offering a proper UK rave on these shores. It was world-class. I had the money to go crazy with the production, talent, and venue. Add on top of that, in a scant twenty months, we had grown Hulla to ten times the attendance of its original event, arguably only increasing the vibe it was known for instead of watering it down.

There are obviously going to be some purists who would argue that Hulla was never as good as that original party, but I would say that's just like saying U2 was at its peak when it was still playing bars in Ireland. We were now peaking, and the question was, how much further could we take it?

Despite all of this, after this big event, my uninsured car broke down, and I abandoned it in the street. I wouldn't own a car again for twelve years. I lived in a basement apartment, where I went that morning. My desire to create and serve was not aligned with my profiting fairly from my work and sacrifice.

It's weird, though. As a society, we celebrate dollars generated. This can be for weekend movie box offices, where the amount of money that a movie made actually clouds our judgment about whether it was any good and whether we wanted to see it at all. Or even big concert tours battle it out for who can make the most millions.

On the other hand, I felt shame if it seemed like I was making too much money. Nowadays, I see that there is nothing wrong with making money if you offer great value to your buyers. I was letting the opinions of a small vocal minority piggyback onto my learned behaviors from CompuFun, denying myself earning my rightful rewards. Those rewards meant fair compensation for my time, energy, and vision, not to mention the incredible risk I was taking. When you are selling every ticket you have in advance, then you are doing something right.

It's too bad I didn't figure that out then. The irony was that I was still accused by some critics of being a profiteer.

From: Tommy
To: Anabolic Frolic

I'd just like to apologize again for what happened at the party. It was my fault. I fell. That's about it. I'd just like to say that the story the security guards gave was totally false. I was never, at any time, told to come down from the speaker. This can be corroborated by the other people who were dancing on the speakers up to and after the incident. I'm not trying to use this as an excuse. I still totally blame myself. To me it just seems that the security was trying to "cover their ass" in the situation.

Sorry if I disrupted things or made you get stressed out. It wasn't quite the end I had hoped for my birthday. Hopefully one day everyone involved will be able to laugh at this because nothing serious happened. Thanks for your time and the kick ass party.

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 34

FOREVERLAND

I wanted to book the International Centre for five events a year. If there wasn't such a demand on promoters to keep their events fresh, with always changing venues, I would have signed a deal then and there. But I felt I had to keep things different, so it was time to find a new venue again. So here I was, starting from scratch once again.

Inspiration for the next Hullabaloo came from our burgeoning message board, the HullaBoard. The ravers had lots of ideas. One that stuck with me was a Peter Pan theme. I wondered about the threat from Disney about using the intellectual property and the story of Disney suing a school for painting Snow White on the walls. So I opted for a Peter Pan-inspired party that we called Foreverland.

It was one of the most inspired events that we'd ever hold. Right from the get-go, the flyer design allowed us to try something different. Instead of a model, we used some original artwork, a Tinkerbell-inspired fairy and "lost boys" with glow sticks in their hands.

I didn't have a lot of venue options available to me any longer, especially in the sizes I needed. I opted for the safety of returning to the Warehouse, the same venue I'd used for our fourth party,

Into the Blue. We only half-filled it then; this time, it would be at capacity.

At the time, the Warehouse was the most used and overused rave venue in Toronto. It had a large main room and a couple of side rooms that could be utilized. Any mid-sized to large rave would be comfortable there. And it was legal. No headaches. From 1995 till 1999, the Warehouse probably hosted hundreds of raves. As I look back, it was an integral part of the Toronto rave scene. I don't think the Toronto scene would have thrived without it as the go-to place for every promoter.

The problem was, the ravers hated it. Any raver who had been involved in the scene for any length of time had probably been there dozens of times. It wasn't just overused, it was used up.

For the success of my event, I had to keep this the biggest secret ever. The contract was signed with the venue before the flyers hit the streets, but I told no one, not even my audio company. I threw out red herring rumors that I was exploring some new spaces. Anything to keep people guessing. That was the pressure I felt to find new locations.

I knew that for this party to be a success at the Warehouse, we had to use it in a totally new way. With our high-concept party, I conceived of an idea. Why not rent movie props to decorate it within our theme?

Up to this point, Robin had been a very small presence within Hullabaloo. She would work with the Friendship crew on whistles and such, but up to this point had had no major input on any of the Hullas. She was thrilled at the offer to take charge of the huge decorative challenge. The Warehouse had to be completely transformed like never before. I figured it would take $20,000 to do it.

Toronto is often referred to as "Hollywood North" for all the large TV and movie shoots that happen here. Toronto can pass as

any large American city, but studios also loved the favorable dollar exchange rate.

That being the case, there were some companies here that specialized in movie props. Robin explored their warehouses and got everything from a large fort, a lighthouse, and a pirate ship and crow's nest for the pirates' cove second room, to large boulders and seaweed for the Mermaid's Lagoon chill-out tent.

We also spent thousands on renting dozens of real trees that were placed all over the venue, creating the effect of a forest on the dance floor.

I also got the venue to agree to us using a back door entrance instead of the usual main entrance. The back door opened into the back of the main room, so the first thing you'd see when you entered would be the main stage in all its glory.

I also spent more money on our biggest lighting system yet. Huge circular trusses were hung from the ceiling, with a screen stretched across each one. Intelligent lights ran around the edges and projected onto the screen as well as into the crowd. The whole thing would rise up and down hydraulically over the crowd. The owner of the venue, upon seeing our lighting rig, called it the best light show they had ever had in their history.

Again I broke whatever money-making rules there were. Our capacity was going to be reduced by over 25% because of the change of venue from the International Centre to the Warehouse, yet I also reduced the ticket price, because I thought I would make enough money.

Normal rules of business say that if your capacity reduces and demand increases, you raise the price. But in my eyes, that would not serve the scene, so I didn't do it.

Hulla was so hot and this party such a high concept, it was an instant sellout.

The biggest secret of my venue was kept. No one had any idea. I only told my tech two days before the show, but he was used to that kind of deadline from our other last-second bookings.

On the Friday night, the word began to leak out. Someone posted on our message board, "HULLA IS AT THE WAREHOUSE!"

Because of the early technology with message boards, no one actually had an account, and anyone could post anything under any name. I responded with a disinformation campaign, posting anonymously, "HULLA IS AT THE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE!" or "HULLA IS AT THE UKRANIAN HALL!" listing several venues. It worked. Ravers replied in laughter to all the nonsense posted on the forum.

My secret was kept till the last second, when I made the official announcement.

Foreverland was received as well as any of our greatest Hullas. I mean, what was not to like? You had the intense Hulla atmosphere, the unique raver crowd, and the most decorated and produced rave that there had ever been.

Most of all, you had the great music. The Hulla format was well established at this point. Everyone knew what they were getting and what to expect.

But an interesting thing started happening at this Hulla. Scalpers were outside selling my tickets. The $20 face-value tickets were going for $125. It was the first time anything like that had happened in the rave scene. Charles, the owner of the Warehouse, said he had never seen anything like it.

I recall seeing the same scalpers outside a large rave the next week; however, they overplayed their cards. Hulla was the only real sellout. Other promoters were happy to take as much cash at the door as they could cram. There was nothing for the scalpers to scalp.

By the time things were ready for my set at 5 a.m., the place was going ballistic. It was like everyone had just had the time of their lives, raved their faces off all night, and were going to thank me by going extra hard during my set. My fan base was growing and becoming more intense. A fan of mine jumped onstage and revealed his "Anabolic is God" t-shirt. The crowd went nuts.

E-by-gum, like always, took his place beside me on the stage, and we played a set for the ages.

"Who wants to come with me?" he shouted at the crowd. "Who wants to come with Frolic?" I could feel the power in this moment. This was transcendent.

Many years later, fans tell me that that was one of their favorite sets ever.

I never preplan my sets; I prefer to improvise them completely. I try to get my mindset into what it's like on the other side, in the middle of the dance floor, and what would be the most perfect track to play right now. This is risky, but I think has a lot to do with my success as a DJ and riding the crowd.

A lot of DJs will preplan and premix their sets. I don't know what the difference is between that and just showing up and putting on a CD. There's no accounting for how the crowd is reacting to it.

I would often get young up-and-coming DJs approaching me and say, "Frolic—you gotta let me play Hulla, I've got the perfect set laid out." At which my first thought was that they had instantly disqualified themselves. At least until they got more experience and stopped planning their sets that way.

Mixing live like this off-the-cuff is a great challenge for the DJ. I have no idea how these two songs are going to mix, except in my head. An intimate knowledge of the music is needed to DJ for large crowds this way. You're not just a jukebox. A jukebox could never keep the energy going on the dance floor in the same way.

I'll know that a DJ has finally matured and "gets it" when I hear them talking this way.

As per usual, the morning sun and warmth came up on the Hulla morning. I can't think of a single Hulla that didn't end with morning sun. Just our luck, I guess. Nothing better than having stayed up all night and being welcomed by the sun the next day.

I also made a mental note that spring officially started with our April Hulla dates. No matter how miserable the winter, that third week of April was always nice, and we always had warm sun to wrap our night up.

Foreverland was another Hulla for the history books.

BOOK BONUS:

See footage of Anabolic Frolic's set at Foreverland. Go to: https://www.anabolic-frolic.com/bonus/

From: Pixy Lee
To: Anabolic Frolic

Thank you, Anabolic, for what you have done for our scene, here in the Toronto, and around the globe. It's people like you who keep this crazy world from dragging us all down. I've been a party kid for a many moons now and your parties really played a part in shaping my values as a raver4life. Seriously. I even have a symbol meaning "PLUR" tattooed on my back!

The happy hardcore experience has left me with so many pictures, so many memories, and an abiding lightheartedness and courage to, at the age of almost 25 now, still smilingly dancing down the street dressed like a rainbow fairy princess. Freaking all the 'blah' people out, or God forbid! make'em smile, sticker something, hug a stranger, etc.

(Posted on the Internet)

chapter 35

SUMMER OF LOVE

Foreverland was behind us as we entered the summer of 1999. I call this period "our" summer of love. The rave scene in Toronto and across the US and Canada would never see such peaks as during the summer of 1999. It's weird how such strong memories are made when decades come to a close: 1969, 1979, 1989—all have their unique feels and memories of youth cultures that peaked during those times.

Our rave scene was peaking, but we all had no idea it was. The summer of '99 would be remembered as the crowning achievement of the rave culture of the last several years. We didn't have a care in the world. Life was good. We actually thought we might be onto something bigger, a way to change the world. Who knew how big it was going to get?

It was time to plan our next event. A huge milestone, the Hullabaloo two-year anniversary. I called the party Birthday Funtopia 2.

All the pieces were in place for a great one. Our reputation was at an all-time high. The rave scene was going nuts. Yet as big as these events were, with several thousand people or more out every weekend, it was still pretty low-key. No one in the press talked about us.

Funtopia 2 was going to be an epic event. We booked a huge DJ lineup and tickets were selling, but once again, I had no venue.

Someone within the local police department where the International Centre was located decided that they didn't want raves happening any more in their area. The manager I had been dealing with was very frustrated by the situation, that he was being told by the police how to operate his business.

Think about this for a second. You have a legal convention space, zoned for holding these sizes of crowds, and concerts are held there regularly. This is why the venue exists. But the police decide to arbitrarily stop this private business (the International Centre) from doing business in this way.

An earlier promoter had decided to challenge the police and went ahead with their event anyways. The police used every tactic they could, from running drinking and driving checks to enforcing a much smaller capacity limit on the venue based on the posted liquor licence permit (even though no liquor was served that night). The police then threatened the International Centre with doing the same during one of their lucrative trade shows. The International Centre had no choice but to concede defeat.

No one had the resources or appetite to fight this in court, so the International Centre disappeared as a venue. So much for me setting up a permanent home there.

I let my procrastination get the better of me, and the weeks passed by without a venue. It was finally getting desperate. I even called the prohibitively expensive Canadian National Exhibition grounds to see about using their space, which had been used for some mega 10,000-person raves. They were booked with a horse show. I was running out of options.

With no options on the table, I wondered how long I could let it go before cancelling. I couldn't just cancel at the last second on Saturday night. I gave myself till Wednesday to find something.

I called all my contacts and finally got a break. A promoter that used a bingo hall in the northern part of Toronto called up the hall. They were gutting the place to turn it into a nightclub but were open to making a deal.

I went to the venue immediately. It worked out perfectly. What was once a bingo hall with a few large rooms was now just a cavernous shell of a building. We could have Hulla here. I rented an additional big top tent to place outside as our second area and a third tent for a chill-out room, just in case it rained. The whole area was barricaded securely.

This wasn't just a suitable last-second replacement. This was a perfect venue for our event. A huge main room, a "warehouse" feel, fresh and virgin in the middle of nowhere. Booking venues at the last second happened way too often, but it always worked out for us.

Funtopia 2 was a crowning glory for Hullabaloo. That recent string of parties, from Rush Hour, Big Top, and Foreverland to Funtopia 2, were, in my opinion, the greatest raves in the history of the planet.

BOOK BONUS:

See footage of Birthday Funtopia 2. Go to:
https://www.anabolic-frolic.com/bonus/

I had matured as a promoter, had fine-tuned all the systems, had developed a niche that became huge, and had proved to everyone that I was on to something with happy hardcore. We didn't have a care in the world, and nothing could stop us, it seemed. Nothing except a cold dose of reality.

From: heather
To: Anabolic Frolic

YOU ARE AWESOME! Shooting Star has to be the absolute best song ever. You should most definitely come to Philadelphia and I know that myself and many other ravers will be sure to see you! I just want to thank you for that song because it is one of the main reasons me and my boyfriend john are working things out. That is our song. He loves you too!

(Sent by E-mail)

part five

TILT WARNING

chapter 36

REALITY COMES KNOCKING

The World Electronic Music Festival (WEMF) was happening in July 1999, about a three-hour drive north of Toronto.

It featured many stages of different types of electronic music, including a Hullabaloo-sponsored stage where I performed with many Hullabaloo talents.

WEMF, like it always was, could be described as an ordeal: three long days and lots of logistical nightmares. But we got through, including an unexpected event at the end of my set. I was just wrapping up, when suddenly, Robin was onstage and asked E-by-gum for the microphone.

"Chris, can you join me at the stage please?" she asked.

I had no idea what this was about, but I didn't like it. I didn't like being put on the spot. I also saw my performances as my creations, and now something was happening outside of my doing.

The crowd started to make a lot of noise in expectation. I made my way to the stage and could feel the most forced smile on my face, not knowing how else to handle this.

"Chris, we've been together a long time now," Robin continued, "and we love each other very much."

The crowd began to explode. My smile was now being held on by terror. What was she doing? How could I handle this?

Robin kneeled down in front of me. I was panicked now. As much as I did love Robin, it was clear in my mind that we were not ready for marriage. I had already turned down the idea of getting "married on paper" for Robin's residency. My mind raced with *How do I handle Robin*, but also with *How do I handle this crowd that wants to see a happy ending here*?

"Can we get a puppy?"

Ah, what a twisted way to put me on the spot. I could feel the blood start to flow around my body again. There would be no marriage proposal today. Thank god.

The crowd went nuts, but I think half didn't actually hear what Robin said. Didn't matter; I was off the hook.

Unfortunately, the weekend didn't stay lighthearted, because at some point during the weekend, an 18-year-old had gone missing. He was there with his younger brother, but now he was nowhere to be seen. He was still missing at the end of the weekend.

Six weeks later, going into mid-August, his body was found in a wooded area near the event. Apparently, he had been on drugs and wandered away from the party, and he would never come back. The "Toronto" scene had experienced its first rave-related death, but because it took place three hours away, it barely measured as a blip on the radar of local news and authorities.

It did bother us, though, internally. It was a sad and tragic thing that had happened. But it seemed like pure misfortune, and everyone collectively moved on from it.

The summer '99 party season was massive. Besides our own events, every weekend held multiple options for every kind of raver. There was usually at least one big "mega" event, often held

at the CNE grounds with capacities of 10,000–14,000 people. And you could have smaller events happening with just a couple of hundred.

There were also impromptu beach parties, often held at Cherry Beach. This beach was also a popular after-party spot with the ravers during the nice summer months.

There was a huge after-party market as well for those people who wanted to keep the party going until Monday. Places like the Comfort Zone and Bassmint never closed. There can be much debate about how much drugs are consumed at any given rave, but it's undeniable that there was very heavy drug use at after-hours events. I felt myself to be a promoter of music and not drugs, so I chose not to spin in those venues.

Things were getting so big, you couldn't help but feel like the wheels were going to come off at any time. So many people coming out, there was a definite critical mass being hit. Raves were the thing to do for anyone in their teens to early 20s and beyond. DJs were the new rock stars.

That summer of '99, it felt like I couldn't go anywhere in public without getting recognized by someone—by random people in the street, by staff in restaurants, in stores, and even once at the Star Tours ride at Disneyland.

One time I was flying into the US for a gig when a young security guard pulled me over for secondary screening. She looked at my t-shirt.

"Moonshine," she said.

"Yeah," I responded, "that's my record label."

"Oh my god, you're Anabolic Frolic, you're my favorite DJ!" She then proceeded to give me a hug right beside the metal detector.

One of my favorite stories was going to an AMC movie theatre one Saturday night. I was booked to play at midnight at a

rave in the area and decided to see a movie first before going to the venue.

I walked up to the concession stand and ordered a hot dog.

"Oh my god, you're Anabolic Frolic, aren't you?" said the clerk. "The hot dogs aren't ready, but I'll bring one out to you when they are."

I went to my seat, and about ten minutes later, the clerk arrived, bowed down on one knee in jest, and said, "Your hot dog, Mr. Frolic." I thought it was nice, and he didn't even charge me.

There's a sad part to this story, though. I would tell that story to people, just as I did now, and someone who knew this guy relayed back to him that I was making fun of him.

I received an angry private message from him about how much I had let him down, that he hated me, and that I was a jerk. Nothing I could say could convince him otherwise. He was a super big fan of happy hardcore and Hullabaloo and completely stopped going because of it.

Some years later, a mutual friend once made an off-the-cuff comment that I was a good guy but sometimes acted assholish. I pressed her about why she said that, and it turned out that she also knew this kid and had heard the story. I was finally able to explain that I had never made fun of him and that obviously, people were just gossiping.

She relayed this back to the original AMC kid, and I was happy to see that he returned to Hullabaloo before the final party. He was sad to have missed it but was glad to be back.

Speaking of gossip and haters, I sure had my fill of them. I guess it's part of the human condition to gossip and spread rumors about people. I'm not nearly as famous as movie stars or Top 40 music artists, but I can empathize with their lives being dissected and gossiped about endlessly.

I often say I am simultaneously the most loved and most hated figure in the rave scene, and I think that's probably true to this day. The ones who love me really love me, and the ones that hate, really hate. I've learned to take it in stride, however. The internet has taken hating to a whole new level, and if no one is talking about you, then you know your star has fallen.

One time before I was booked for a six-week DJ tour of Australia, I decided to visit an Australian rave message board to see if I could find out any information about the events I was playing. Right away, I saw a message thread titled "Anabolic Frolic."

I checked it out, and it was a debate between ravers who were looking forward to seeing me and those that hated me. All I could think, though, was that if you are well-known enough that people on the other side of the planet are debating whether you suck or not, you have truly made it. I thought that was awesome.

In general, though, I don't read up on myself online. People are going to say whatever they want to say. I'm not going to be able to change their minds. All I can do is live my life. I do subscribe to the philosophy that the best revenge is living well, and here I am, getting to write this book. So you haters out there can suck it!

chapter 37

STARTING TO COME UNDONE

My phone rang on the afternoon of Sunday, August 8. It was Tyler Cho, one of the partners in Lifeforce, the biggest rave promoters in Toronto. There was a good network of communication and respect between all the biggest promoters, and we spoke regularly. We also would see each other regularly every weekend when we were out promoting.

I had taken the month following WEMF off. Our next event wasn't scheduled until October 9, and my promotion was scheduled to start the last week of August, so it had been a quiet weekend for me around the apartment.

"Chris, did you hear the news?" Tyler said, concerned.

"No, I have no idea what you're talking about."

"Someone died at Effective yesterday."

"What?" I couldn't believe it.

"There's going to be a meeting with all the promoters this Tuesday above the Rancho Relaxo restaurant at 7 p.m. Andrew Stevens is going to be there."

"OK, I'm coming."

Andrew Stevens was the owner of Stevens Event Security and ran security for most large raves. His team had worked the Effective event, which had been at the Warehouse the past weekend.

Media didn't seem to pick up on this story much, with only some brief mentions of a Saturday club death. The Warehouse was an all-purpose venue, holding concerts, club nights, and raves. It was also the partner venue of the high-profile Guvernment nightclub, with which it shared the building.

The death seemed to be covered like any of the other regular deaths that happened in club land, but it rocked our scene. This wasn't a kid who had wandered into the woods where no one could find him—this was someone who had died on the premises. It was a scary thought.

Tuesday came, and about fifty of us squeezed into the upper banquet room of the restaurant. Every promoter of any significance was there. Our scene and livelihoods were at risk. Andrew Stevens took charge of the meeting and began a rundown of what had happened.

"Well, as you know, there was a death this weekend at Effective. A 22-year-old was at the party and passed out on GHB. His friends who were with him tried to wake him up by blowing cocaine up his nose. He apparently had a heart attack and died on scene."

There had been much talk of GHB already, before that weekend. It had definitely gotten popular. GHB was a drug sold in liquid form, a powerful intoxicant. Weightlifters would use it to sleep well during their off days, so their muscles could repair and rebuild.

It was also used as a date rape drug, since it could easily be poured into someone's drink, and they'd be passed out before they knew what happened.

It had become popular in the rave scene during that time. I'm not totally sure why, but these things tend to rise in popularity due to availability. Some major player must have been bringing large quantities into the Toronto area, and it was making its way everywhere. The same thing would result in the spike of Special K (ketamine) use at raves, or crystal meth.

The problem with G and raves, of course, is that a rave is not the venue for you to sleep at. An overdose of G would put you out, resulting in medical attention.

I couldn't care less about Ecstasy, because it was my understanding that it was a relatively safe drug and certainly more so if taken on its own and you weren't creating drug cocktails. Ecstasy also enhanced the rave atmosphere. But GHB seemed to have almost all negative qualities.

GHB was the new enemy of the rave promoters.

I'm not sure if much more came out of the promoters meeting other than getting us that information and promoters agreeing to start a new anti-GHB campaign. Each of us would contribute $200 to produce 100,000 "GHB Kills" stickers that would be distributed within the scene. We hoped we could take back control of our scene from some of these drugs that were risking destroying it.

From: kasper
To: Anabolic Frolic

Hi, I just wanted to say that your last CD blew me away. The first time I heard it I was in my car and I got so dazed out hearing track 9 I hit the car in front of me.

I really love your work and I'm so glad I got to see you at WE the People in Philadelphia.

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 38

FORMING THE TORONTO DANCE SAFETY COMMITTEE

★

Because of the two recent deaths, some of us in the scene felt it would be best to try and reach out to various city authorities to engage in dialogue and see what could be done to keep a healthy, safe, aboveboard rave scene.

We were no longer underground like we'd been even a year ago. Everyone knew that raves were happening everywhere, so it would be better to work with the authorities than run and hide in the shadows.

We were most worried about an overreacting crackdown and banning of raves.

Kim Stanford, the registered nurse behind TRIP, conceived of a new group called the Toronto Dance Safety Committee, or TDSC. The first TDSC meeting was held shortly after the Effective death.

The group was a mix of Toronto rave scene figures and authorities. There were representatives from Toronto Police, Fire, Toronto Health, Standards and Licensing, as well as city politician and youth advocate Olivia Chow. On the rave side of things, there were myself and Tyler Cho representing the larger rave companies,

a couple of smaller promoters, and some individual ravers, including Will Chang, a Bay street lawyer and Hulla Raver known better online as Klubmasta Will.

The city and authorities had a lot of questions for us about how things worked, and we wondered as a group what could be done; perhaps we could create a set of standards that promoters could comply with to ensure the safest events possible.

We would meet monthly and work on our agenda of making raves safer and more acceptable to the authorities.

There was concern by some of us promoters that not every promoter out there was ethical. Plenty of promoters during this boom time would not turn down the extra money from cramming as many people as they could into their venues, especially if they were collecting an extra $10 per person for the cash door price.

That obviously ran counter to everything I had been doing and trying to create.

There were also a lot of dodgy venues being used. Places like Shock Nightclub, which I refused to use, because the owner would turn the water taps off completely to boost their water bottle profits. I thought there could be worse things than having some guidelines that all promoters should follow for the benefit of all of us.

From: Justin
To: Anabolic Frolic

Mr. Frolic,

I have wanted to go for the better part of 5 years but certain troubles and events in my life had prevented me from being able to drift away and live in that dream. Last night was a combination of euphoric emotions that I don't believe I can describe in words. As I danced and whistled to the soul shifting sounds being played by legends I had once only dreamed of seeing, I began to have an emotional out-cry from a place in my soul that I wasn't aware existed.

It was a place I am sure could only have been unlocked by the atmosphere YOU have cultivated and forged through Hullabaloo over the past eight years. Listening to your 7 wonderful HAPPY 2B HARDCORE compilations and reading about your struggles and triumphs made me feel like I had been there before somehow.

Anabolic Frolic, I want to extend my appreciation to you for creating my incredible dream. I am sure there will be attempts to recreate what you built, but I am sure that nothing in the world could surpass or even match the atmosphere of a Hullabaloo.

Yours truly…

p.s. I hope you read this because I just want you to know YOU ARE ONE OF A KIND!!!

(Sent by E-mail)

part six

TILT

chapter 39

A VIEW TO A THRILL

While all of this was happening, we had to push forward with plans for our twelfth event. Hulla had had such an incredible run in the last year with some absolutely legendary events; the pressure was on me again to come up with something big.

We once again didn't have a venue to start with, but since five of my previous events had had their venues booked at the last second, it was just the way I was used to doing business. I didn't think twice about proceeding without one.

Back in those days, no promoter ever listed their venue on the flyer. It was always "venue to be announced the night of," via our infoline phone and website. It gave you licence to book something last-second.

Talent was booked and the flyers printed and distributed, and tickets began to sell. Looking back, this seems like a ridiculous way to do business. But it wasn't just me; every promoter then did the same thing. It's crazy now to think that I'd risk my life's savings in this way.

My original plan had been to return to the International Centre for this October event, but with the police having taken that safe, proper venue away from us, I would have to find something else.

I began my venue search with a phone number from a friend of a friend, who promised that they could get me a lead on spaces. I called him up. He was involved in the Toronto movie business and was familiar with all kinds of spaces that were rentable for movie shoots. He asked if I was interested in Ontario Place, a large theme-park-type grounds at the base of Toronto, right on the shore of Lake Ontario. A venue like that would be a huge score, and I was very interested. I was told later that the grounds themselves weren't available but the parking lot was. The parking lot of Ontario Place would have been a cool score even if the party was in tents, so I had my contact follow it up. Two weeks later, I was notified that Ontario Place didn't want to do it, and that was the end of that. The problem now was that Hulla was about a month away, and we were going to have to find something.

I got a call from Ryan Kruger, who owned Destiny Productions. He had a lead on a new space. It was an underground parking complex in the north part of Toronto. The owners had invited all the rave promoters in the city to come take a look, as they were interested in renting it out for that purpose. I showed up for their "open house" along with about ten other promoters.

The space was exactly that, an underground parking garage. It didn't get much more "old-school" that that. It was a big concrete level with over 60,000 square feet in space in the basement of an old shoe factory. Mike from Zinc Security and his partner Adam Lowel were offering the space together. We were toured through the floor, as new security features and additions were pointed out, such as the newly installed sprinkler system and fire alarms. The fire department had been through there and had given the place the thumbs-up, we were told.

We were also told that the police were contacted about pay-duty work, and they had said to use the space as it was for now, and we could talk about pay-duties after the venue was

broken in. Lots of power was available in the electrical room, which had a loud buzz.

They wanted $10,000 for the night's rental plus a take of the water sales, which would be considerable, when you think of 4,000 thirsty people. With my razor-thin margins, they would be making more money off the event than I would.

They also wanted me to pay $250 to their cleanup guy. Since it was just a parking garage, I'd have to rent portable toilets to cover 4,000 people, another significant expense. I also had to hire the services of Mike's Zinc Security, so they'd be getting another cut of the night from me. I had my reservations about Zinc Security, since they had a very bad reputation in the scene from other events they had worked. I had heard unsubstantiated stories about guards robbing dealers, taking bribes to let people in the back door, and overall, having a generally rough demeanor.

I still wasn't convinced of this space. It wasn't that I didn't think it was legal; it just wasn't ideal. There was also next to no parking in the area, which I was concerned about. Destiny had a party booked there the week before mine, and I decided to take a wait and see attitude towards the place while I considered my options.

David, the guy who was my Ontario Place contact, had a lead on a couple of other spots, which I explored as he took me on a tour. Most of the spaces were too small for what we needed, but we did come across a large warehouse on the west side of the city. It was used for some sort of contractor, and when I visited it, there were workers and forklifts everywhere. We walked around the venue; it wasn't perfect but could probably do.

The only problem was that I had no idea how legal something like that might be. My friend Will Chang, a real-estate lawyer, dug up the zoning plans for that part of town and found that it was zoned as industrial, probably not ideal. We didn't know for sure what might happen to us, though, even if it was illegal. My big-

gest concern was having the party shut down; city zoning officials don't work on the weekends, but it's easy for the fire marshal to show up somewhere and shut an event down. I had too many unanswered questions about this warehouse and ruled it off the list.

I was called repeatedly by Mike from Zinc to see I was interested. I was offered a $1000 discount off the rent if both Destiny and I would book the underground parking garage.

Again I was told, when I asked, that the fire marshal had already been through the venue and that everything was fine. Sprinklers and fire alarms were recently installed, which was something that had prevented us from having a party in the water bottle warehouse back in our first year, so I knew that was good to have. I still wasn't convinced, though, and waited to see how the Destiny party went the week before. But time was ticking. Thousands of tickets had already been sold in advance. I had a lot riding on this night, yet I still was considering canceling the whole thing if I needed to. I knew if I couldn't secure a space by the Wednesday before our party, it would be canceled, so I could give everyone fair notice. This was a position I was in all too often, so it almost seemed normal.

The Saturday of the Destiny party rolled around. I also happened to be DJing at it as well, which was perfect, because I'd be able to see the venue in use with my own eyes. I was playing a midnight set, so I got there shortly before then. As I was entering the venue and working my way down the entrance stairway, I was passed by Mike, who was escorting two police officers through the venue. As he saw me, he asked how everything was looking for next weekend, and upon seeing the police walking through the venue without incident, I told him I'd be in touch. He continued on with the cops, and I worked my way down to the main floor.

It was dark, but the sight of rave lighting could be seen across the floor in the distance. People were milling around, and vendors were set up. I walked around and found a row of Porto-Potties and

noticed a couple of sink stations near them as well. The venue had been cleaned up some since I last saw it. Still dusty in the air, but overall, it wasn't too bad.

I played my set that night without incident. I had a dedicated crowd that followed me to all my gigs. It wasn't Hullabaloo, but there was no denying the energy created and the positive atmosphere that were hallmarks of all my sets. I didn't have any technical challenges playing this venue. Overall, it seemed like any old warehouse.

I walked through the venue and spoke with my friend Tim, who ran the Bump Ahead smart drink booth.

"So, what do you think?" I asked.

"We've had some power issues, but we ran a long extension cord. Overall, this place is pretty wild."

As I continued checking out the venue, I bumped into Ryan and his partner Erik Sands.

"How's it been going?" I asked.

"Overall, smooth. The only trouble we've had was a fire alarm went off, but it was dealt with," Ryan reported.

They had approximately 3,000 people. A little bit less than what I was expecting, but the venue handled it easily with tons of empty space all over.

All in all, it seemed to be a fairly smooth-running night, and it gave me hope for my show next weekend. I left early and spoke with Mike again at the entrance on my way out. The Destiny event ran till 10 a.m. the next morning, and all the reviews glowed about this amazing old-school space that they had found.

My choice on Monday was either to cancel the party or go ahead with it at the parking garage. I called Mike up and told them we had a deal. We arranged to meet at a nearby coffee shop to sign the contract. The contract clearly stated it was being rented for an all-night "rave party" and also made mention that the lessor would make sure all exits were well lit. They also required me to

have one million dollars liability insurance, which I already had in place. They needed a couple of thousand dollars down payment, which I paid, and I signed the contract. Hullabaloo had its space.

There were a couple of issues I still had, though. One was the lack of running water. I called the Porto-Potty company to book the toilets but also the portable sink stations. Destiny had one station (with four taps), so I decided to book four stations (sixteen taps total). You couldn't drink from them, but they were good for washing your hands and cleaning yourself up. I also arranged for my emergency medical workers to have several cases of water available to give out for free to anyone who needed one. The EMS guys had their own little room set up that was quiet and away from the action. I had the Hullabaloo "Friendship Crew" distribute several cases of drink boxes to give away.

I also rented ten large fans to help circulate the air, which was a concern of mine, as well as crowd barricades to control the lineup and keep people away from certain parts of the building.

Because I didn't trust Zinc Security, I insisted that my regular security company also work the event, so I could at least have some familiar faces working with me. The result was a security bill effectively double what it should have been. But it made me feel better to have them watching my back. After the Destiny party, there were numerous complaints online about how security had treated the ravers.

With 60,000 square feet available, I was told I could have over 5,000 people in there if I wanted to. That just seemed too much, and I limited the event to the 4,000 tickets I had put on the street in advance, with none available at the door.

The weekend fast approached, and I felt I had done everything I could to make this new space work. I was glad for the opportunity to see it in action the week before and fix most of the problems I saw with it.

I contacted my insurance company and requested a certificate of insurance for use of that venue at 501 Alliance Ave, in Toronto. They faxed it to me that day, so I had it to give Adam.

The TDSC had a meeting on the Friday before our Hulla. I was unable to attend, due to the time constraints I was under, and I had Will there in my place to discuss my upcoming event and everything we had done to ensure a safe party at this venue. No one at that time voiced any objections to our using that space.

This was it, showtime. I released the location information on our infoline and also on my website. I outlined the measures we had taken to address some of my concerns from the week before (water, wash stations).

I arrived to the venue early Saturday morning to make sure things were getting set up properly. I met with the Porto-Potty company as they delivered and set up over 30 portable toilets and the sink stations. The barricade company arrived, I paid them, and they set up as well. My sound company was already there getting ready. There were two rooms of music to set up. I also booked a large bouncy castle operator, a regular fixture at our parties back then. Everything was on track, so I left everyone to go about their business while I completed the tasks for the day.

I picked up the DJs at the airport without incident and got them checked into their hotel. I dropped them off at the Keg Mansion steak house, a Toronto institution for all visiting DJs, and gave them cab fare to get to the venue. Ran home and packed up the thousands of free whistles to give away that night.

My mother was visiting that weekend for Canadian Thanksgiving, and I figured this would be a great opportunity for her to see just what exactly I did. I was spinning at 5 a.m., so I told her to go to bed, set her alarm for 4 a.m., and take a taxi to the venue and let security know she was my mother. She was excited, and I left for the venue.

Got back to the venue at around 7 p.m. Doors were to open at 10. Vendors had started to arrive, and everything was looking good. Security was in place. I had booked four shuttle buses that transported from Nathan Phillips Square in Toronto to the venue all night. The party was officially sold-out in advance, and people were told not to come if they didn't have a ticket.

Time to open the doors, and there was already a huge lineup around the building. Large lineups like that make me nervous, as they always grab attention, and I can't breathe easily until everyone is inside the doors. My fears of Zinc were coming to fruition already in the evening, as I learned they were letting people jump the line for a $50 tip to the doorman, so they didn't have any motivation to get people in any faster than they already were. Making that kind of money off my back like that didn't sit well with me, but at this point, I had so many other things to take care of that I just had to let it go. We also had scalpers out front selling my tickets, but that had become a regular occurrence despite my efforts to limit maximum ticket sales.

We were already having problems downstairs with power. The vendors' lights were tripping the circuit breakers, and the entire back of our second area was in darkness, including the bouncy castle, which couldn't use its inflater. So I had to run around looking for Adam, who was more concerned about getting the water bar stocked than some of our other pressing problems. Finally, some of the vendors ran long extension cords from one wall to the other side and were able to share the power better. There wasn't enough power to operate many of our electric fans, though, which sat quiet most of the night. There was a huge garage door that they kept half open, with security standing beside it, that allowed a huge gust of fresh air to enter the venue.

The first real trouble of the night was around midnight, when I was informed that the police were there but that Mike was tak-

ing care of it. They were concerned with the line of people outside and in the neighborhood, so at that point, security tried to get them in faster. I saw Mike escort them through the building, and shortly after, he reported that they had left. Everything seemed to be moving along nicely then.

It was later in the night that things really went downhill. At around 2 a.m., I was at the main entrance when some people carried over an unconscious young man, a friend of his shouting his name behind him. Certainly not a good sight, but I can't say an unprecedented one. Over the years, you'd see people who needed some medical attention at the events. If we hadn't, we wouldn't have bothered hiring EMS people to be there just in case. The medics tended to the young man outside, and an ambulance was called shortly after. Since I was taking care of other party business, I wasn't able to observe what exactly was happening or the status of the overdose.

More police began to arrive to investigate, but again, I let Mike take care of it. He wanted to be paid the balance of the rental, so we went to the side of the building to get squared up, and suddenly, six police officers were walking up the side. Once Mike spoke to them and made sure they didn't need anything, we retired to a small room just off the entrance and got paid up. It was around 3 a.m. by that point.

Reports were coming from the hospital that the young man wasn't doing too well. I took comfort in knowing that the more time passed, the more likely he was to pull through it, especially if the culprit was GHB, which is absorbed quickly by the body. A lot of people were taken to hospital for GHB overdoses that summer, so I, being the eternal optimist, tried to make the best of a stressful evening, and the party continued.

As it got close to 5 a.m. and time for my set, my 52-year-old mom showed up and was escorted by security to the main stage. Upon my seeing her, she was brought onstage.

"It's Frolic's mom!" shouted MC JD. The crowd went nuts as my mom waved to everyone. Before long, my mom was given a couple of glowsticks by Robin. She spent the next hour onstage, bless her.

It was now time for my set, which came out quite good, I thought, after listening to the recordings afterward. It's amazing that no matter how tired and stressed I might be, when it's time to get in front of the crowd, it just sends a rush of energy into me. My mother danced around onstage for my entire set and was soaking wet when it was all over. It definitely was extremely hot in there, as the circulation of 4,000 bodies dancing together is going to generate a fair bit of heat and sweat in the air. I was having so much fun, I was in no rush to get offstage. I wanted to give my fans their money's worth.

BOOK BONUS:

See footage of Anabolic Frolic's set at A View to a Thrill. Go to: https://www.anabolic-frolic.com/bonus/

My mom was so impressed with the whole production, and some ravers took it upon themselves to escort her through the building and make sure she got to her taxi without any trouble.

It was a little past 6 a.m. by this point, and I made my way to the main entrance again to check with security and see how things were going. It was at that point I was told that the young man from earlier wasn't expected to make it.

I was stunned. I couldn't even believe that something like that could ever be a possibility. I still held some outside hope that he would pull through, but the wind was definitely out of my sails.

More police began to arrive as they began their investigation. Some cops with a video camera arrived and started walking through the venue, filming everything. It was around this time we thought it would be best to end the party, so we had the last DJs end their sets. I wasn't sure what to do, so I hung around, just in case someone needed me. I was told by Mike that the police wanted to speak with me, so I went downstairs to meet them.

I never for a second considered not speaking with them; it just seemed to be the right and responsible thing to do. I was running a legitimate company and did everything in my power to put on a successful event of this kind. Something bad had happened, and I had to deal with it, not run away.

I entered a small room, off the garage. There were about four cops and a man with a large video camera. All eyes were on me as I entered the room.

I'm not sure how I can sum up the feeling of having to walk into a room like this under these circumstances. Dread. I felt sick that something had happened to someone. The cops weren't there to be friendly to me.

Then behind me appeared a friendly face. Klubmasta Will walked into the room. As a lawyer, he wasn't as intimidated by the police, but he did not identify himself as one. He entered silently, as an observer. I felt his presence as a figurative hand on my back, supporting me. I am grateful to him for this moment.

I was told again that the young man at the hospital was not expected to live. They took some information from me, my name and address, and they looked at my driver's licence.

"So, what happens next?" I inquired.

"There's the possibility of criminal charges, depending on what happens. You could be sued by the family," one of them replied. I acknowledge that he was trying to shake me up, and he did. It was a terrifying place to be in at that moment.

The only thing I could think of to do to deflect their fear tactics was tell them that I was insured. Later on, they'd use that against me by portraying me as an uncaring promoter who didn't care, since his ass was covered.

After I spoke with the police, they left. I took a seat and sat with Will in stunned silence.

There wasn't much left to do at that point other than pack up and go home. I clung to hope that this person would make it.

By the time I got home, I was a physical wreck. Not only from being up for over 24 hours by that point, but the combination of heat, humidity, and stress had taken its toll, and I had the headache to end all headaches.

I decided not to tell my mom what had happened just yet. I was still trying to keep positive that this guy might live after all. The thought of someone dying at one of my own parties, a Hullabaloo of all places, was just too alien to accept.

I tried to sleep for a couple of hours and woke up again around 11 a.m. to the smell of my mom cooking a Thanksgiving dinner turkey. It was at this time that I called Will.

"He died in the hospital," Will said.

I just couldn't believe it. Hullabaloo was about peace, love, being happy, and unity with your fellow people. We thought we could change the world. Now someone was dead. One of my patrons. Someone had come to have a good time, just like everyone else, and now was dead. My brain had a hard time reconciling this.

The first person I called was Kim Stanford. I felt she should know, and maybe she could offer some words of comfort. Her nursing voice soothed, but we couldn't escape the reality of what had happened.

As far as media relations go, I wasn't sure what to do. I decided to take my website offline, so at least reporters wouldn't have an easy way of getting copies of the flyer and plastering that on TV.

The TV was full of coverage of, as the police in that division were calling it, Toronto's first rave death. We learned that his name was Allan Ho and he was a student at Ryerson University. The newspaper articles that came out were ridiculous, as they portrayed a visual of a crack house where kids slept in garbage in the dark. It was then that my eyes first opened to how skewed a look a newspaper article can take on a subject, and this has made me very suspicious ever since. I was glad my mom had attended this event, as she had seen with her own eyes what a glorious party it was and how different the newspaper articles made it look.

One thing was for sure, though: a venue of "underground parking garage" didn't look good, no matter how the story came across.

I basically tried to stay away from the media on TV, turning the channel when it came on, but we were at the beginning of a huge media explosion. Unfortunately, our event was the catalyst for it.

The days following A View to a Thrill saw the story portrayed every day on the TV news and in the papers. The whole "illegal rave" angle was really being pushed, with TV crews showing the building, the owner of which said he didn't know it was being used for a rave. The building was just being hammered over and over.

I had nothing to say and feared the media, so I chose to not say anything. Luckily, neither my name nor Hullabaloo's name were being mentioned much, as the media didn't have that information. Local politicians were now beginning to chime in with their comments, and our mayor, a flamboyant ex-furniture salesman, was on TV talking about raves, though he later admitted that he didn't even know what they were at the time.

The weight of this stress was almost unbearable. I felt completely alone. I wondered who I could reach out to, and a name came to me. Don Berns, better known by his DJ handle, Dr. Trance, was one of the elder statesmen of the scene. Almost every-

one I knew or dealt with was around the same age, in their early twenties. But Don was an exception. I'm not sure of his age then, but he could easily have been in his forties. He was a long-time radio personality as well as an early rave pioneer.

He and I shared one thing now, though. He was the promoter of Effective, and his last event that past August was the one that marked Toronto's first rave death.

I called Don's number and got his voicemail.

"Hey Don, Chris Frolic here. You probably heard what happened. Just was wanting to reach out. Call me back anytime," I left on the recording.

Don called me back thirty minutes later.

"Hey, it's Don."

"Hi, Don," I said, and then went silent.

He and I shared a silent phone call, neither of us speaking, but both of us knowing we were the only people in the world who knew what the other was experiencing. He supported me in his silence.

(During the writing of the first draft of this book, I was able to tell Don by email that he would be a part of it, that the phone call we shared would be in this book. It is with great sadness that I share that Don passed away from a heart attack at age 67, before this book was published.

Upon hearing the news of his death, my mind immediately went to this phone call and the gratitude I had towards him. I was grateful I got to share with him before his passing what the call had meant to me.)

That October saw Toronto bring on a new chief of Police, Julian Fantino. Fantino had previously been the head of the London, Ontario police and had a controversial history there, tangling with that city's gay community. He was also an expert in working the media.

All of this was happening during a generally slow news period as well. This was a pre-9/11 world. As I write this today, city politicians wrestle with how to manage gangs and guns. At that time, this sexy topic of corrupted young people, "illegal" parties, and drug use was just too much for the media to resist.

Nothing was said of our music or culture or of any of the positives of the rave scene. This was boiled down to a simple new-era crack house.

Local rave message boards were heated with discussion about the situation, with some people demanding my execution and others defending me till the very end. I chose not to participate or even read most of the discussions, as that was an exercise in frustration. Instead, I withdrew from public view.

Most of what I have to say or what I experienced during this period has never been shared until now.

To make matters worse, three weeks later, on Halloween, another promoter threw the biggest rave in the history of Toronto, with 16,000 people attending. The only problem was that it was outdoors in the parking lot in the Docks area of Toronto. That created quite the shit storm, as residents of the Beaches neighbourhood were upset at the sound that was coming from across the water. More politicians began to get involved, as their local constituents were calling them. Raves were becoming a regular fixture on the 6 o'clock news and in the daily papers.

Then, to add more fuel for the fire, there was a shooting at an after-hours club called Spinkat, which got labeled as a rave death. The media gorged and gorged.

From: punzy
To: Anabolic Frolic

hey Chris,

It's hard for me to know what to say in this e-mail because I don't really know you very well. But I just wanted to make sure that you knew that amidst all the crap that is being said right now you still have so many people who will stand by you and support whatever you do.

I'm sure that you know how much impact you have had in so many people's lives, Hullabaloo is so much more than just a party that people attend once every few months it's become a group of friends a type of lifestyle and guaranteed acceptance for so many people who didn't have these things positively in their lives. Hullabaloo has been my party since I first started raving I haven't been able to find it's comparison yet. But I'm sure that you've heard that all before.

I guess when it all comes down to it I just wanted to say thank you for all the friends I've made through the message board and at your parties. Thanks also for the memories that I will have forever even when this is all over I want you to know you have helped to create the stories I will tell my grandchildren. And I also wanted to let you know that there are 5000 times as many of us who support you then there are those who tear you and Hullabaloo apart… those people are just louder. All this shit will pass…

thanks again..

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 40

TDSC MEETINGS

The Toronto Dance Safety Committee meetings suddenly became high-profile, with all kinds of city councillors taking part now. The conference room we started in was now standing room only.

City Councillor Frances Nunziata, in whose ward the parking garage was located, attended.

I don't think any of these city people realized that the "evil illegal rave promoter" was sitting in their midst and was actually a founding member of the TDSC. They had no idea of the history of raves, of Hullabaloo, of me. Of the work and sacrifice that it had taken to get there. There was a belief that promoters, and certainly that promoter, were just something to be dealt with.

I was too afraid to speak up to identify myself as such, although everyone in the room who had been part of the TDSC prior to this obviously knew this information.

Councillor Nunziata had a copy of a videotape that was shot by the police the morning of my event and wanted to show it to the room. I glanced over at Kim, and she was already looking at me. We knew that tape probably wasn't the most positive thing in the world. Kim responded that we didn't have a VCR available in the room but would see if one could be acquired. It never was acquired.

The pressure to come up with some guidelines for promoters to follow was accelerated. We hoped a compromise with the city would stop them from putting us out of business.

The threat of raves "going underground" was thrown around a lot, if a workable legal solution wasn't found, but I certainly had no appetite for doing so, and I don't think any other large promoter did either.

I had already been "forced underground" once by losing the International Centre. The fact was, our raves would have to find a way to operate within the system or not at all. That was the scary part. We could lose everything.

From: Jon
To: Anabolic Frolic

I'm scared here. Is the page down because of the person that died? I hope that Hullabaloo does not go away……. I would be very upset if the best party organizers packed up and went away. This is obviously a BIG deal but it is not the organizer's fault. I was searched like 4 times by security, there was nothing else that could have been done to prevent this tragedy short of people just being searched all night long while listening to music.

PLEASE DO NOT CLOSE DOWN OVER THIS!!!!!!

At the very least post something to the main Hullabaloo page telling all of us what is going on. Do not leave all the loyal Hullabaloo ravers hanging. Without Hullabaloo the scene is nothing, it is my standard for judging other raves against. You are the leaders of the rave scene to me, if the leaders quit will the rest follow?

I had to say this, Hullabaloo is very important to me and all my friends. PLEASE tell us what is going on.

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 41

FOR THOSE WHO KNOW

I wasn't sure what to do next. *Do I continue business? Give up and disappear?* I and the entire collective scene were mourning the loss of one of us. I knew proceeding with business as usual probably wasn't the right thing to do. Normally we'd have flyers for our next event out on the streets only a few weeks after the last party, but that didn't seem right or particularly tasteful. At the same time, I didn't want to call it quits or have something beyond my control dictate my fate. I also felt I owed it to everyone out there to not just give up. Hullabaloo meant a lot to a lot of people and had positively affected thousands of people's lives. Married people had met their mates at a Hullabaloo, kids had been born as a result. Young gay kids had found the courage to come out of the closet on our HullaBoard. My own life had been greatly affected.

I wrestled with what to do. A shooting, a stabbing, a murder, or a drug overdose that would happen at a nightclub would often see that nightclub open the next night. The only ones who wanted to see me quit were the haters. I wasn't going to quit for them.

It meant too much to everyone just to give up, so for our regularly scheduled December 1999 date, I decided to do something a little different. To keep things a little bit more low-profile, I decided to throw a party with no flyer and call it For Those Who Know. With less than a month to go, it was advertised merely on

our website and didn't even have a proper flyer designed for it, only a little bit of art denoting the headlining attraction, a UK Vs Canada set of me and DJ Vinylgroover, our most frequent visiting DJ, playing back-to-back along with MCs E-by-gum and Magika.

In light of what had been going on with our scene, it seemed only right to address it on the website:

"*Our precious scene is under fire and it's up to all of us to show the powers-that-be that we can come together and party responsibly and safely! Since this event is not being promoted by usual means, it's up to all of you to please spread word to everyone you know and would like to see there and come for all the right reasons."*

Promoting a large rave event without a printed flyer was completely unheard of and new territory. The internet was still gaining steam, but social media was a decade away. We broke new ground by doing this at the time.

I was also motivated to donate one dollar from each ticket to TRIP, the Toronto Raver Info Project. "Education is the key" said our website, and the reality is that education probably would save most drug deaths.

There's a reason TRIP existed and did the work they did. It's the reason harm reduction is a thing at all.

At the time, the information about how Allan Ho had died had not yet been released, other than that the death was drug-related and that ecstasy had been found in his system.

Before I began, I had to make sure I had a venue, as I certainly didn't want ever again to repeat the situation I had gotten myself into last time. I swore I would never throw a party again without having a venue first. Since I was planning on keeping the capacity at a more reasonable 2,000, it gave me more options on spaces.

We ended up returning to the Newz nightclub, which we had used a couple of times the year before. It was a decent mid-sized venue. Unfortunately, the management there was a nightmare.

They'd station guards by the washrooms to make sure no one refilled their water bottles, so I had to make sure that was addressed. I met with the manager to discuss terms. He wanted $10,000 for rent, but would make no guarantee not to restrict water, since he felt it was his right to do so. Obviously, if you force people to buy water again and again, at the markups at which water sells, it can be quite lucrative. This was a recurring problem with most of the venues in the city. After arguing the issue, the solution I came up with was to buy the water rights outright from him, and the lowest he would go for that was $7,000.

It was really important that this party be a smooth one, and safety issues like water had to be addressed, so I really had no choice in the matter but to give in to his extortion if the event was to happen at all. So I paid $17,000 rent for a one-night rental; plus, the club had next to no lighting or sound, and all that would have to be brought in.

I was contacted shortly after by Marco, the actual owner of the Newz, and was told that Gordon was no longer involved at the club and to come deal with him directly. I was fine with this, because Gordon was a slimebag. I wrote up a contract stating the conditions of the rental, which stated that I was paying for the complete use of the venue and all sales, as I was hoping to sneak in that we could also run the coat check, to give a friend of mine an opportunity to make a few extra bucks.

Contract signed, everything was cool. I also made arrangements to have a paid-duty Toronto Ambulance on standby, as was recommended by our developing TDSC promoter guidelines. Arranging for paid-duty police was also in the guidelines, but the police were unwilling to work any paid duty at that particular club, due to some gun violence there in the past and liability issues. In addition to the ambulance, I also had my regular EMS workers in

the building, in the hope that the ambulance would never actually have to treat or see anyone.

Things had calmed slightly in the news and politically around that time, so we weren't anticipating any trouble.

Tickets sold out completely in advance once again. The decision to have no flyer couldn't stop the rabid Hulla fan base.

The night of the event rolled around, and who did we find lurking around the venue but the scumbag Gordon, who was there for some reason. With a half hour before doors opened, he began threatening me.

"I'm going to call the cops right now and have this whole thing shut down unless you let me run the coat check."

This guy was literally threatening me over making a few bucks at the coat check. Getting those doors open and getting everyone in quickly was my biggest concern, so I quickly conceded to him.

The doors opened, and immediately, the energy was electric. We had reduced our attendance by more than half of our biggest events. That left the most dedicated Hulla Ravers. This was going to be special.

The night started and continued smoothly. Why wouldn't it? We had a long track record of success, with one terrible unfortunate incident. But I would never be able to shake those fears again.

At 2 a.m., it was time for my set with Vinylgroover. The MCs introduced us as boxers, like this was a title fight for supremacy. The room swelled. This was what Hulla was about. These moments. There was something intangible about it.

He kicked off with a great hardcore version of the *2001 Space Odyssey* theme, and away we went. We agreed that we would take turns, mixing three records each. When it was my first turn to mix, Magika signalled me to stop the music. He addressed the crowd.

"Listen, a few things to say. Myself and Vinylgroover, we're very lucky, we get to travel all over the world to do this shit. But you know what? You lot are the best crowd in the fucking world, man. Really, really warm. A lot of people in England used to say you lot were behind us where the scenes were concerned. But you know what, with fucking putting this flyer on the internet with no [printed] flyer, I think us lot are behind you."

He said it, but we all knew it. Hullabaloo was one of a kind.

"Make some noise for Anabolic Frolic!" he closed, and I started my first track.

The only problem was that ten minutes into the set, my nose started to bleed. I have this thing in the wintertime with spontaneous nose bleeds, and it was gushing out right in the middle of the set!

Vinylgroover took over again, and I ran to the side stage and looked for something to fight the nosebleed with, and luckily found a roll of toilet paper, thank the heavens. As I was tending to my nosebleed, I could hear the music stop.

"Hey, they're bigging you up, man," said a raver next to me. From this side room, as I pushed toilet paper up my nose, I could hear MC Magika again speaking to the crowd.

"There's one person you've got to make some noise for. His name is Anabolic Frolic. If it weren't for him, there would be no scene. On the count of three, I want you to make some serious noise for him. Because if it wasn't for him, we and you wouldn't be here. One…two… and three…"

The venue exploded in noise, but there was no way I could return onstage just yet. I did feel appreciated in that moment, though, for making the decision to keep going.

After a few minutes of tending to my nosebleed, I was forced to place a ball of the toilet paper up my nostril, and then I kept my head down for the remainder of the set so that no one could see it.

We absolutely destroyed them for the next two and a half hours. I literally felt, as I surveyed the crowd, as though we had actually delivered blows upon them, and they were all totally exhausted, yet no one was leaving. It was a great feeling. It was good to have that positive Hulla experience back again.

"This is what we call a real…fucking hardcore…underground party," said Magika over the throbbing bass drum of a track called Elysium. "No flyer on the street, and we are ram jammed, man!"

The toilets ended up overflowing in the hallways that connected the two musical arenas, creating "Lake Hulla," as the ravers affectionately called it. The water was inches deep as the night went on, and I can remember seeing ravers' fun-fur bell bottom pants just soaking wet. It must have added ten pounds of weight.

We made a point of selling water for a reasonable price, half the usual at most nightclubs that hosted raves. We ended up selling about 2,000 bottles of water. Between paying the seven grand, hiring workers to sell it, buying the water itself, and having leftovers, the water lost money, but for the safety of my patrons, it was money well spent.

After all that stress with scumbag Gordon, his staff abandoned the coat check at some point during the night. But some goodhearted ravers literally jumped the counter and handed everyone back their coats.

We got through the night without any serious incident and threw one hell of a party. It was a great night for us, but also for the scene as a whole, as it felt like it was much needed after all the crap that had gone down recently.

From: Steve
To: Anabolic Frolic

Hi there Chris, my name's Steve and I just wanted to thank you for For Those That Know. Despite everything that has happened surrounding the electronic music scene in the past few months, there remains good reason to believe that it can survive in a healthy and dynamic way, thanks in large part to Hullabaloo. I no longer fear that the music and vibe are witnessing their death in Toronto at the hands of irresponsible media and irresponsible partying. Aside from reaffirming my faith in what we have here, I just had a plain ol' good time.

I don't think I've ever had more fun or experienced a vibe quite as extraordinary as I did last Saturday night. I thought I could feel the positive energy just pouring out of everyone in the main room.

It sounds fucked up, but at the time I felt like I was a locus for all the elation in the room, and I felt higher than any serotonin rush could bring me. I was gushing at the sight of all these truly happy and joy-filled kids having come together……like I said, it was fucked, a truly psychedelic experience.

I couldn't stop talking about my experience for days afterward, I tried for hours to explain to my girlfriend the sensation I'd had. And props to your girl for wearing that tinky-winky suit all night, it really contributed to the infectious silliness of the whole evening in that room. Well that's enough blathering on for now, thanks again for throwing such a wicked party!

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 42

OOH CRIKEY, WOT A SCORCHER!

We followed up For Those Who Know with a full-blown Hulla in February of 2000. Things had remained quiet for the time being, as far as the police and media went. We weren't sure what, if anything, might come of all the controversy from the last summer, so I proceeded.

The venue we decided to use for this event was a large club called the Docks Entertainment Complex, a world-class venue capable of holding thousands of people. I called them up and made an appointment to see Rob Gilroy, the general manager. I worked out a deal to rent the venue, which was the most expensive venue I had ever used. That would be for rent and their staff. I still had the rest of the event to pay for.

Because of my leaving things to the last second, I decided to take a chance and promote this event without a printed flyer once again, since there really wasn't enough time to get flyers onto the street. Promotion once again fell solely on my website and word of mouth, and we broke new ground in what could be accomplished in that manner. I don't think any promoter before had managed to attract thousands of people to an event without having a print-

ed flyer on the street. I contemplated whether I could actually promote and sell out a Hullabaloo party with nothing more than our logo and a date. I'd say there would be good odds that would work.

At the same time we were planning this event, the TDSC was refining its Promoter Guidelines, and part of those guidelines was the request for paid-duty police for larger raves. A meeting was planned at the local police division headquarters between myself and Andrew Stevens, head of Stevens Security, the in-house security team of the Docks. The meeting itself was pretty uneventful; we met with a sergeant there who requested four officers and one sergeant for the night, five in total. I found it a reasonable request.

I decided to surprise a rave acquaintance of mine who was becoming a friend—Tommy, who a year earlier had fallen off the speakers and apologized for "ruining my party." He was also an up-and-coming DJ under the name Silver1.

His birthday was coming up, so I put his name on the flyer without telling him, only leaving him to find out once the information was posted publicly.

"Chris, you magnificent bastard!" he posted on the Hulla-Board. I found out later he called all his friends and could barely get the words out that he was booked for Hulla, one of the pinnacles of any DJ career.

I also hired the Toronto Ambulance paid-duty again, in addition to the EMS workers I had working on the inside. This was just becoming the cost of doing business—which was becoming prohibitive.

Despite all the surface success, I had still barely made money previously. I had only managed to move out of the basement apartment into a one-bedroom. The costs kept rising, yet my dedication to keeping ticket prices modest was as strong as ever. I was pricing them at what the customer wanted to pay, not for the

value I was creating or what they really should and needed to be priced at.

A journalist with *Maclean's* magazine wanted access to our event to shoot photos and interview me. They were doing a cover story on raves in an upcoming issue. I knew that was not the kind of coverage I was looking for.

I instructed Docks security and management not to let them in. But they did their best to talk their way in, and management asked me repeatedly if I wanted to change my mind. I don't know what the Docks would have gained out of this, but I saw no positive.

The cherry on the cake was when the question was relayed back to me of whether I had anything to say to the family of Allan Ho. Yeah, OK, I saw what they wanted now. That was such a loaded question. The only way I interpreted it was that the implication was that I was responsible in some way for his death. No deal at all.

For the most part, I shunned all media. In time, we'd learn to get the media to work with us, but I was too sensitive, and I wasn't going to accept a last-second request like this.

The night itself went on without incident, but my fear was always with me.

The cops didn't do much except sit on the hoods of their cars. No arrests were made, and the cops left by 6 a.m. They were all paid in envelopes with cash, and no receipts were ever given to me, not that I asked. Considering that the police actually did nothing but show up, this almost felt like some sort of tax.

The cost of throwing these events was continuing to add up. Even though we had a sellout crowd of 2,500, I walked away with less than a couple thousand dollars. Add to that the inherent risk of throwing these things, with no guarantee that we'd get the

needed turnout, and it was turning a once profitable business endeavor into a bad investment.

To put this in perspective, I had netted $2k with some of my first parties, which had cost a quarter of what I was outlaying now.

This would barely pay for me as a DJ somewhere else, yet I was taking on these months of work and expense, not to mention risk.

The event was successful enough, though, that I booked our next event there for April. The Docks was only available during the wintertime for special events like ours, as they were mostly a seasonal summer-type venue and had regular nights booked during the rest of the year. As expensive as it was, it was an ideal space, so I was happy to make use of it.

This time was also special, because we'd finally adopted the puppy that Robin had asked for the year before. He was a cute fawn pug that we named "Happy HullabaFoo," or "Foo" for short.

We became a family of three and would take Foo everywhere with us. We met other local dog owners and would spend hours every day at the off-leash dog park, socializing while Foo ran around with the other puppies.

We began to feature him on flyers and started a "Hidden Foo" tradition where the flyer artist would hide Foo's face somewhere in the flyer art. We'd let the ravers search for him when the flyer was released.

Foo would often appear outside our raves. Robin sewed him a raver outfit, complete with pink fun-fur overalls and a purple top hat. I don't think Foo realized the indignity, and everyone loved it and would donate to the Humane Society in exchange for taking pictures with him.

Foo would be in our lives to the ripe old age of sixteen, when he passed away peacefully at home with his family around him.

From: Jilly Bean
To: Anabolic Frolic

The first time I ever saw Anabolic was at club E in buffalo. It was a school night but I had to go see him. He's such a chill guy and I stayed till the end just to meet him and tell him that he makes my day. So I knew what he looked like.

Then I went to my first hullabaloo on October 7th, 2000. I saw him walking around randomly and I was amazed how no one knew who he was, but I was too shy to go up to talk to him.

Then at the last Hulla I went to,12/9/00, after it was almost over we left and I saw him standing at the entranceway just smiling at how well the party went. It was a proud smile. So when we left I saw my boy go up and thank him. So I followed right behind and gave him a huge HUG and thanked him for one of the best times ever.

So much love brought together by one man. He deserves so many HUGS just because of what he stands for. And I told him that I had the best time ever. The parties rock and there's him to thank! What other person greets his guests at the door and wishes them a good time? so when any of you see this man he deserves a thank u and a BIG HUG* so peace to Anabolic for promoting such a phenomenal scene

(posted on the Internet)

chapter 43

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR

A month later, we were in the middle of making dinner. It was a night no different than any other. Robin was cutting some tomatoes, and I was working the stove with tilapia. It sizzled in the frying pan.

Suddenly there came a loud knock at our apartment door. We usually ignore the door if we're not expecting guests, and we can't be bothered with solicitors and religious pushers, but Robin was expecting a neighbor's visit and went to answer the door. She then turned to me.

"Uh, Chris, it's for you," she said in such a way I knew this couldn't be good.

Since we lived in such a small apartment, a one-bedroom in Toronto's Yonge & Eglinton area (often referred to as "Yonge and Eligible" because of the high concentration of young professionals in the area), I was only a few feet from the door. I had no choice but to follow and see who was waiting for me out there.

I approached the door nervously and finally took the dreaded turn around the door to face four Toronto police officers, fully dressed in their street uniforms, including bulletproof vests and, of course, their sidearms. A particularly surly looking senior cop spoke to me.

"Remember me?" he snarled.

I did, actually, but in my fear, I froze, staring at him. What in the hell was he doing here? I shrugged my shoulders, feigning that I had no memory of meeting this cop before.

"From the rave in the parking garage. The one where the kid died."

Now, of course I remembered meeting this cop there, Detective Garrison of 12 Division police in Toronto. Out of fear, I still stood there, saying nothing. Were they here to arrest me? I didn't know, but whatever business they had with me, this was not going to end well.

"We have a summons for you to appear at the inquest into the death of Allen Ho."

Boom. And there it was. They served me with the papers and left without saying anything more. We closed the door, and Robin immediately started berating herself for answering.

"If you go to prison, I'll never forgive myself!" she cried, but it wasn't her doing.

Prison, police at the door, someone is dead. This is not how it's supposed to be.

From: Plurette
To: Anabolic Frolic

Chris,

I know our situations in the past are most probably very small, and very unlasting in your mind, but call me correct, when you believed in me, and my dreams, helped me, you showed me forms of guidance I needed, and on the night I needed it the most, you were there, and gave me with a huge hug when you found out who I was.

You gave what you didn't have to, to me, and I am forever in your debt. It's a small impression you've made on my life, but forever an ever lasting one, and I hope that everything will be okay, more so I know that everyone will be okay.

I've looked up to you, for sometime now, without you, I wouldn't have some of the dearest people to me, including my boi.

And without you, on 2 of my birthdays I wouldn't of had as much fun as I did celebrating them in Hullabaloo style. And so many great evenings, that have been had by all.

You know, I owe you, if you ever, and I mean, ever need anything, I owe you big time!

I believe in you, and Hullabaloo!

(Posted to the HullaBoard)

chapter 44

THE INQUEST

The shit really hit the fan with this news that the provincial government was going to hold an inquest into the death of Allan Ho and into ecstasy use at raves. It was stated publicly that his case was chosen, from among the 18 people who had died recently from ecstasy use, because it was "typical." That made no sense; eighteen people had died from ecstasy, three of those were at raves, and one of those was at an "underground" rave. So how was the inquest into an underground rave "typical" of the seventeen other deaths? It was a witch hunt, and they wanted the sexiest story possible. I could smell myself burning at the stake.

The news of the inquest was brought to me by the same detective I had spoken with, that terrible morning in the basement of a View to a Thrill. Now he was personally delivering my summons to appear at the coroner's inquest. And this wasn't going to be the last time I saw Detective Garrison, as he took a personal interest in me and would show up at my door many more times in the future. What was very odd was that a summons normally would get delivered by a court bailiff, not by uniformed police officers. This was the beginning of the personal harassment they would start.

I had no idea what an inquest did, what its purpose was, or what my exposure might be to other charges. I called Will for some advice.

Will was a real estate lawyer, but he worked at a large downtown law firm and certainly had plenty of contacts. He made some calls and found out what was going on.

I learned that in Ontario, an inquest is held when a citizen dies from an unnatural cause, because it's our duty as a society to investigate how it happened in the hopes of preventing it from happening again. It's not a criminal trial, and supposedly, there is no prosecutor or defence but, instead, a provincial examiner who is supposed to be unbiased. Supposedly, one has nothing to fear from testifying the truth, and lawyers are unnecessary.

The inquest is overseen by a chief coroner acting as a judge. Applicable parties can move to have representation at the inquest, whether through a lawyer or for themselves personally, to question expert witnesses and make their own recommendations.

A jury of five citizens listens to all testimony and then drafts a set of recommendations.

Inquests can hear cases dealing with such things as why a child's safety seat failed to work, a suspect who was stunned with a Taser while under police custody, or a methadone clinic client who overdosed.

Inquests generally take at least a couple of weeks, making legal counsel prohibitively expensive. Weeks of trial days for a lawyer could cost tens of thousands of dollars, and because this was not a criminal trial, no legal aid was available.

I wasn't sure what I was going to do. I had barely been making a living at what I was doing. I had no bankroll for a fight like this.

Our fear was that "raves" were effectively being put on trial because in this case, a rave was where the ecstasy was allegedly consumed. At the time, it was a mistaken belief that raves were the

only places where ecstasy was taken. Most ecstasy was consumed at home, but that wasn't what the discussion was about.

I also feared my personal exposure during the inquest. This was not a criminal trial, but a criminal case certainly could be made against me from evidence that was heard at this trial.

It was certainly a possibility that a jury could come back with a recommendation based on the idea that raves were a bad influence and a bad thing for young people and that they should just be prohibited. We had to mobilize and get our side heard.

Kim Stanford organized a rave community meeting for information and also to organize a response to the inquest. It was standing room only in the conference room at the Queen West Health Clinic. Ravers, DJs, and promoters who all cared about the scene attended.

It was clear right off the bat that we, the rave scene, needed some legal representation to get our voice heard. The proposed witness list of about three dozen people was mostly filled with police, public officials, and some rave "experts" who were being brought in from the US. Their biggest claim to fame was appearing on sensational television shows and railing about raves being a pit of debauchery that was corrupting the youth of a generation.

As the witness list stood, I was the only real rave expert who would speak, out of the three dozen.

The legal representation was similar. The Toronto Police Service, the Toronto Fire Services, and the City of Toronto were all going to have legal representation. The head provincial lawyer, or examiner, was working hand in hand with Detective Garrison, my new number one fan. There was never any effort to contact me before the inquest to try to learn anything from me about the rave scene. It was clear they had their own views and agenda.

Money was collected to pay for Luis Sokolov, a lawyer who was interested in representing the case. Enough to start playing ball.

It was March, the inquest was to begin in May, and between now and then, I also had a Hullabaloo scheduled. So we pressed on.

From: Mike
To: Anabolic Frolic

Chris,

I am sorry to hear about this awful news. You must feel terrible. Unfortunately you can't be responsible for every single damned person that enters an event. There are bound to be problems with mass amounts of people, whether it be raves or rock concerts or car shows or anything. Too bad the media is hot on raves at the moment. If you need anything, just let me know.

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 45

GROUP HUG

The next Hullabaloo event was scheduled for April 15, 2000. Through the Looking Glass was inspired by Alice in Wonderland and had some pretty cool artwork, and after the success of our two previous flyer-less parties, we opted to continue with our word-of-mouth and internet-only way of promoting.

This party was billed as a follow-up of sorts to Foreverland in that we were going to spend a huge amount of money again on decorations to totally transform the Docks into another world, with each musical area having its own theme. DJs were booked, tickets were being sold, and Robin was in charge of decorations and had all kinds of stuff booked through the prop house again.

Everything was looking fine as we approached the weekend, and on the Wednesday before the event, Rob Gilroy, Andrew Stevens, and I went to the police division for what we expected to be a very routine request for paid-duty police again.

We arrived at the division and after some waiting were escorted into a large conference room and seated. Shortly after, about ten people walked in, none identifying themselves to us. The staff sergeant began the meeting with his outline of how many police were going to be needed for this event. I could see in his hands printed information from our website and other materials. They had obviously been prepared for our meeting and knew exactly who I

was. Most of the people in this room were in suits, and a couple, whom I assumed to be undercover cops, had goatees. I recognized one officer from his many media appearances—Chief Inspector Taverner. I knew he was not a friend of the rave scene.

For this event, they wanted sixteen cops, more than three times what had been required just two months earlier. On top of that, they threatened that the event would be shut down if any illegal activity was witnessed and that I would be arrested for contributing to the delinquency of minors and facilitating drug commerce. In addition, the Docks would have their liquor license threatened by allowing illegal drug activity to happen within their establishment.

They also wanted to be paid cash upfront at the beginning of the night, which had never been the case before. It was becoming very clear that they had no intention of allowing the event to go on all night, and I was merely paying the cops to bust me on some bullshit charge.

No matter how ridiculous that charge might be, there would be nothing stopping them from arresting me that night and taking me away and letting me sit in jail till Monday. In addition, you can bet that all local media would be alerted to what was going to take place, and they'd all love to get video and pictures of the "underground" rave promoter being taken away in handcuffs.

That aside, just the cost of hiring sixteen cops was prohibitive, and when we questioned their numbers, we were told that they were not negotiable and that we could either take them as they were or not at all.

As per the voluntary TDSC rules, however, which I had helped draft, I was obligated to hire these cops, and there was nothing stopping them from dictating how many were required. That was a shortcoming of the guidelines. The police were not going to be dictated to about how to do their jobs, but at the same time, they

had an effective loophole to force a promoter either to break the guidelines or to lose money on their event and possibly make the entire thing too prohibitive to proceed.

After their very gruff presentment of their requirements, the three of us were shell-shocked and weren't certain how to proceed. We got out of there with "OK, let us think about it and get back to you," to which they responded that they needed to know by the end of the day, so they could book enough cops to work.

We got out of the police station as quickly as we could, got into Rob Gilroy's truck, and all exclaimed variations of "Holy fuck!"

"They're going to nail you, buddy," said Rob. "Cash up front, they're not going to let that party last the night."

I only had to think for a moment; there really was only one option.

"Rob, if you'll refund my money for the rental, I'll just cancel the whole thing."

"No problem!" exclaimed Rob, obviously glad to not have to mess with the cops himself.

Andrew began making calls.

"The rave is cancelled. It's the end."

This was going to be a huge blow to the scene, one we might not recover from. The cops had taken their stance that they didn't want these things happening, in safe spaces or not. The inquest was approaching. Things were looking pretty grim.

I got home and immediately started calling ticket outlets with the news that it was cancelled, so they could deal with it appropriately. This was going to be huge; a huge event from one of the biggest promoters had just taken a huge hit from the authorities.

Robin and her friend Dave arrived home from some errands in preparation for the event.

"It's cancelled," I said.

"*What*?" they both repeated, incredulously. I told them what had happened and continued calling my ticket outlets with the news, and I posted the information on the website.

Shortly after I completed that, I called Phil Barret, another promoter I knew in town who had started out at the same time as me, but in the techno space. We had continued to consult with one another on occasion on promoter advice.

After telling him the news, I added, "If by chance you know of an event going on this weekend, I've got four UK DJs coming in."

We quickly worked out something so he would take my DJs. Hullabaloo would remain officially cancelled, but Fun House promotions would take the talent, and there would be an announcement of an "unofficial" replacement party featuring some of our talent. It was posted by Will on our message board, like any party, as Hulla remained cancelled and we wanted to keep the optics for the authorities that this wasn't a Hullabaloo event.

Phil made a few calls to secure a venue and worked out a deal with Athena, owner of the Opera House. It was a downtown Toronto concert hall that he had used in the past.

What made this very funny was that Phil was a prominent Detroit techno promoter, for the kind of crowd that would never have anything to do with a happy hardcore party. We teased that his audience would never forgive him. But he came through for a friend and ally in need.

In less than two days, the replacement party came together. My talent that was booked and had plane tickets bought still came over. This saved my neck, having some cash generated to cover those expenses.

Phil did all the running around and executing of the event, and for that I will be eternally grateful.

Since I wasn't supposed to be officially involved in this event, I couldn't show my face there and had to sit at home while the

party went on. The police showed up many times, looking for me, as they thought I was just trying to be clever and sneak this party in under their noses. Yeah, that was pretty much exactly what was happening, but I certainly didn't want to be caught doing that.

Police had shown up many times during the day to grill Athena about the event, claiming that more tickets had been sold for it than actually had been, and more harassment followed. Luckily, the venue was in a different police division than the Docks, so overall, the police presence wasn't as bad as it could have been.

I called Phil's cell phone from my house for updates through the night. Finally, at around 4 a.m., I arrived in preparation for my 5 a.m. set, the last of the night.

By the time I was to begin, the dance floor had swelled for an incredible show of support. The previous DJ ended his last track, and the crowd began to roar its support of me. I let them continue their ovation while I tried not to get too choked up, but it was too much to take, and the tears began to swell in my eyes and down my face.

The show of support from those ravers could possibly be the defining moment of my DJ career, as I had never felt so much love radiating towards me in my life. It was an absolute special tribute, their gift back to me for all the good times I had provided them. It is even difficult now, when writing this, not to be choked up, recalling that tribute. We didn't know if this was going to be the last of Hulla. For all we knew, it was.

In defiance, Robin wore a special Queen of Hearts costume that she had had ready for our Alice in Wonderland theme. I told her that night that she would always be MY queen of hearts. Yeah, sappy, but that's how we are.

The replacement party made just enough money to pay the DJs' wages and plane tickets. And since I got a refund on the venue rental and wasn't out of pocket on flyers or even for sound

rental, since the event was cancelled, the weekend wasn't as big a financial bust as it could have been. For his troubles, Phil didn't take a penny. He's a raver.

Group Hug would become a legendary Hulla event in its own way. An absolutely special event that the police, city, and authorities didn't understand or comprehend. This was what we were fighting for, and we weren't going to give up easily.

We took some much needed rest and prepared for the upcoming inquest.

From: silver1
To: All

OMG. For those of you who didn't come or didn't stay until the end you missed something that in my opinion happens once every 100 years. Words cannot describe the feeling that was going through the room at 5:55 a.m. In all of my partying experience I've never an ovation of ear splitting proportions for the length of time it lasted. It was a feeling/experience that you can't put a price on and will probably never experience again. Hullabaloo, in its darkest hour, brought together the most devoted partiers and gave them something they'll never forget.

Thank you Phil for "stepping up to the plate and knocking a home run out of the fucking park" (E By Gum).

Thank you Chris for turning around my evening with a simple smile and hug.

Thank you everyone else who with every ounce of enthusiasm gave me a party memory I'll never forget. Cheers all

(Posted to the HullaBoard)

chapter 46

THE INQUEST BEGINS

The Toronto rave scene was mobilized, we had a legal representative, and the inquest was just days away.

Kim Stanford called me to clarify something, however. Technically, the lawyer would be representing the TDSC and not me specifically. He would be looking out for my interests that were aligned with the greater scene.

I wasn't sure what to do with that information. I understood why that might be the case; obviously the money was raised by the scene as a whole. But where was this going to leave me? I had no money like that, and the inquest was due to start in days. I guessed I would just have to take my chances.

Two days before the inquest, I received a phone call from a gentleman named Paul Burstein. He name-dropped a couple of mutual acquaintances and then explained to me that he was a defense lawyer interested in representing me at the inquest. I went down to his office immediately to discuss it further.

It was a Saturday afternoon, and I went to the law offices of Burstein-Payne. The offices were mostly empty, except for one person, a youngish man, perhaps in his mid-thirties, clean-cut but with a pierced ear featuring an earring of the scales of justice. On his wall was a painting of Bob Marley surrounded by the very

obvious spikey leaves of a marijuana plant. It was clear where this lawyer stood.

Paul introduced himself, and we sat down. I asked him his interests in this case, and he answered that he was interested in defending good people. I explained that I had no money. He answered immediately that he would work pro bono.

OK, I agreed happily. This seemed like a good thing, but only after the inquest began would I realize how much I did need a lawyer looking out for me.

Being a full-time DJ and rave promoter meant I didn't have much need for a suit. I hadn't had a "job" in several years at this point, and no one in my family had died since I was twelve years old. But jeans and a hooded sweatshirt weren't going to cut it when the inquest started on Monday, so I raced down to the Hudson's Bay Company and visited their suit department. I had no idea what to get. I settled on an overly formal double-breasted dark grey suit. They were able to arrange some emergency tailoring for me to have it ready for Monday.

I also needed shoes, socks, shirts, a belt, and ties. I didn't have the foggiest idea how to buy any of these things. The shoe salesman asked me some very basic questions about what I was looking for, and all I could respond with was, "I'm going to court and need to look good."

I picked up three ties. I figured that I might have only one suit to wear, but I'd switch the ties out each day.

I guess I was about as ready as I could be.

Monday morning rolled around, and I pulled myself out of bed very early in the morning, much earlier than I'd been used to. My body fought me by feeling physically sick, with the thought that I might throw up.

I got dressed and called a taxi to take me to the courthouse. TV camera crews were already positioned outside; this was a big

media case. The lack of other news happening at the time didn't help, nor did the mayor and the chief of police making this their cause célèbre with daily news conferences.

The right-leaning daily paper, the *Toronto Sun*, seemed to run sensational headlines every day. Literal front-page news. Some of them were completely ridiculous like "Viagra and E all the Rave," implying that ravers were getting erections and having sex in the middle of rave parties. Journalism at its finest.

I quickly made my way inside and took a seat behind Paul, who was positioned at the representations table. Beside him was Luis Sokolov, the TDSC lawyer, and lawyers for the City of Toronto, Police, Fire, and also a lawyer for Ticketmaster, whom I assume was there only to protect Ticketmaster from any exposure over the fact that they sold my tickets.

The provincial examiner was seated at a connecting table right beside Detective Garrison. They conferred continuously. It definitely felt like an Us versus Them situation.

Journalists with their writing pads sat in the spectator's gallery as well as about two dozen ravers and people connected with the scene, such as Kim Stanford.

I also saw a middle-aged Asian lady seated at the very back, dressed in dark clothing, wearing dark sunglasses. I knew right away who it was—Allan Ho's mother. This inquest was about the death of her son. As a parent now of two children, I can understand any parent's anguish over the loss of a child, and my heart goes out to her. She would never speak or testify, but she did write a handwritten statement that was included in the province's discovery package. I felt too emotionally raw to look through the papers but Will shared with me what he read. She talked about her only son, how he was a good and helpful young man, and how much her heart ached that he would never be coming home. No one could read something like that without feeling for her. I'm not

sure whether she blamed me or anyone else, but she had lost her boy, and that was why we were all here.

Will found something else interesting: in her written statement, he told me she mentioned that Allan had had his wisdom teeth out that week and was on painkillers. That would be the only time that fact would be mentioned during this case. The crown and police were fixated on ecstasy as if it was the one and only cause of his death.

The chief coroner who would be presiding over the inquest entered, and we all stood, as we would in any court of law. Then we sat, and the chief outlined the purpose of this inquest and the rules which would be guiding it.

The next step would be listening to arguments from anyone who would like to be represented during the inquest, as to why they should be. Each of the lawyers stood and spoke and were granted representation for the inquest.

The crown attorney then began the inquest with an overview of the events that had led to Allan Ho's death. That Allan Ho was a twenty-year-old Ryerson University student who attended the View to a Thrill rave on October 9, 1999. That he had attended with a friend of his. That the party was held in an illegal venue—a parking garage. That at some point early in the night, he fell to the floor unconscious, was treated by EMS on-site, and was later taken by ambulance to hospital, where he died. That the purpose of this inquest would be to discover what exactly had happened during those steps and to learn more about these rave parties that were happening every weekend, attended by young people everywhere. That we'd be speaking to everyone who was involved that night, from the police, security, and EMS to the promoter of the event.

The first witness was called: a police officer who had arrived on scene and described what he saw there. The next three days

were filled with police officer testimony. A great way to paint a picture of the event.

The individual police officers testified about their personal experiences at the event, from what they had observed inside to catching someone smoking marijuana outside.

Detective Garrison took the witness box and introduced a videotape they had shot the morning of the event. I had known about its existence for some time and feared what might be on there. But truth be told, it wasn't that bad. Sure, it showed a near-empty parking garage filled with water bottles and flyers for other parties that littered the floor, as well as the last few dozens of ravers as the party ended and they left the building, but it really wasn't that bad.

If you videotaped the last moments of any large music festival or concert, it would look pretty much exactly the same.

Much had been said about the garbage and that kids were sleeping in it. Paul brought this up during Detective Garrison's testimony. "So, what kind of garbage did you see lying around the venue?"

"Mostly water bottles, paper."

"By paper, you're referring to flyers for other events."

"Yes."

"OK, and I just want to be clear, you're not talking about diapers and old food or anything."

"Yes, that's correct."

Paul also addressed the kids sleeping or appearing unconscious around the venue. "So, if you were so concerned about the safety of these young people, why didn't you do anything to check on them?"

"Well, I'd kind of push them with my foot, to make sure they were alive."

"What do you mean, you pushed them with your foot? How much force were you using?"

"Well, I'd just give them a kick, kind of like if you're trying to wake up a dog."

"So you're saying you kicked them like you'd kick a dog?"

In reality, what goes on in courtrooms often doesn't resemble anything like what happens in TV or the movies, but Paul had gotten in a zinger. We in the spectators' gallery smiled discreetly and stifled our giggles.

Every day, the newspapers would run articles about the inquest, and obviously, three days of testimony from the police wasn't a great way to start painting a positive picture of what a rave was.

Most uninitiated people reading about raves for the first time in the paper would be right to be shocked, but we had yet to get our word out. I was scheduled to begin testimony the next day.

Local TV crews outside wanted to interview me, but I was too afraid to talk to them. The media just seemed to be my enemy. I know that was mostly because I didn't know how to work them, and the police did, but without knowing that, I was too afraid to learn when the stakes were so high. This battle was being fought in the media as much as for the jurors. Toronto City Council was slated to debate whether to continue to allow raves on city property, for example the CNE grounds, and so the media relations war was important to sway their votes.

I was able to put off talking to the media, explaining that I was waiting to get my testimony out. I let Paul, Luis, and Kim handle the daily media scrum outside the court.

But my testimony was coming up. Paul explained that he wasn't allowed to coach my answers, but there were a few things I needed to know about how this process was going to work.

I'd be free to speak for as long as I wanted to answer a question. There would be no dramatic "Just answer the question" or "Yes or no!" demanded of me.

The crown attorney would lead the questioning, and when he was done, each of the other lawyers would be allowed follow-up questions.

The morning of my testimony arrived, and I arrived at the courthouse again. Up until this point, I had never had any run-ins with the law in any way, let alone having to testify, so to say that I was nervous was an understatement.

I had spent the previous night doing some research about raves, their history, their ideals. I wanted to get it right, since my testimony would be the first positive spin on what a rave was and why people went. Up until now, it had just been viewed as an event in a dark, dirty building where tons of young people got high on drugs.

The day began, and I was sworn in on a Bible. I took my seat, and the crown attorney began his questions.

It began with my definition of what a rave was.

"A rave, at its simplest definition, is an all-night dance party, attended by all ages, where DJs play electronic music. But it's much more than that. There is a distinct loss of the attitude found in most nightclubs. It's also a shared collective experience with all those who attend. DJs can be compared to shamans of early tribal rituals. People are celebrated for who they are, not what they're not. It's a celebration of music, fashion, and culture unlike anything else out there."

The crown attorney laid in for the first of what he expected to be a hit on me.

"Let's talk about the music for a second. This techno music without words."

Here we go, he's trying to create a picture of a bunch of drugged up teenagers marching to "music without words" like a bunch of zombies. Too bad for him he had the wrong guy on the stand.

"Uh, my music has vocals, and lots of them."

"What?" He was stopped dead in his tracks.

"I promote and play a style of electronic music called happy hardcore. It's filled with uplifting vocals about love and the music."

He wasn't going to paint a picture of me with a bunch of zombie dancers. I continued.

"I have a series of albums called Happy2bHardcore, we've sold hundreds of thousands of copies throughout the US and Canada. People love the music, and that's why they come to the events—to hear the DJs that they are fans of. DJs are the rock stars of the new millennium."

That last line would be quoted in the next day's newspaper.

I continued to explain DJ culture, mixing records, importing the vinyl, where it comes from. There was a lot more to this than just playing repetitive beats in a dark room to a bunch of drug zombies.

After that, the questioning turned to water. I wasn't sure why or how, but I could tell that he was trying to link high water consumption with ecstasy use. I explained that I do all I can to make water available, including the deal I made previously to buy water rights to ensure access to water. At the end of the day, rave patrons are spending several to ten or more hours dancing and exerting themselves. Under those circumstances, anyone would consume a lot of water.

The questions then turned to things like soothers and other things they considered drug paraphernalia. I explained that these were fashion items, that there was a huge candy raver subculture, and that wearing things like a necklace with a soother at the end was part of it.

He went into detailed questioning about our tolerance of drugs at the rave. About what the policy was if someone were caught with drugs.

The policy was to not let drugs into the event if caught and to destroy them outside by throwing them into a bucket of water. Often, if someone was caught with something inside, it would be destroyed on the floor. I felt that was enough.

He asked why we didn't turn illegal drug offenders over to the police. I didn't see why we should.

"So if you caught someone with one pill of ecstasy, you would let them go?"

I couldn't lie about how I felt about that. "It would be confiscated or destroyed, and they would be let go, yes."

Afterwards, Kim Stanford praised me for being so courageous. I hadn't really thought to answer any other way.

I was glad of my decision in life up to this point to have avoided drugs. I was able to speak positively about the scene, knowing first-hand that drug use was not a mandatory requirement to being a part of it. I had been a raver, a DJ, and a promoter, and drugs never had anything to do with it. I was able to testify and not be a hypocrite. There would be no scandal later of video or photographic evidence of me consuming drugs at a rave somewhere. It didn't exist. I was a good guy to have up there. Hardly the evil promoter image that had been painted in the media.

Questioning turned to the TDSC guidelines for safe raves, which, obviously, I had helped develop and had tried to adhere to in our few parties since, even though it was merely a document with no legal status.

He began to attack me on two decisions I had made recently. The TDSC guidelines set a requirement for larger events to have a paid-duty police presence, with a suggestion as to how many police that would be: two for every 500 people.

Now, with our For Those Who Know event, the local police division was not offering paid-duty service to that venue. As far as I was concerned at the time, if the police didn't want to work it, it was fine with me, and we proceeded without them.

The crown attorney asked then if the guidelines would be followed at my convenience.

I responded that it's ridiculous to think that the police could just not offer paid-duty service and prevent that event from happening.

He then brought up the paid-duty situation that resulted in the cancellation of our Through the Looking Glass event. He pointed out that the police in that case HAD offered to work it, but I was unhappy with their proposal and instead had cancelled. The police had requested twice as many officers as was suggested by the guidelines, let alone the threat and harassment I felt.

These two examples showed what an issue the police and paid-duties were with these guidelines, and the power they had to arbitrarily shut down any rave.

This was the tip of the iceberg with the bigger problems of Chief Fantino's Toronto Police. His job, and that of the police force, was to enforce the law. Nowhere in the police mandate was it written that it was their job to decide what events went on in what locations.

The reality is that drugs are everywhere, in homes and certainly in any kind of nightclub situation. It's debatable whether a rave has any more or less drugs than a crowd of similar size anywhere else.

Furthermore, the drug use at nightclubs is very much hidden. In the rave scene, the openness meant more information, education, and ultimately safety for the patrons. Nightclubs would not ever let TRIP offer their booth, because of the admission that there were drugs being consumed there, besides alcohol, of course.

Questioning went into the average age of ravers, with lots of talk then, as now, that raves were filled with fourteen-year-olds. Fourteen-year-olds high on drugs. I think everyone would agree that drug use could be debated, but everyone would agree that fourteen-year-olds shouldn't be getting high. The thing was, this was a fallacy. Now, I'm not about to bet my life that a fourteen-year-old has never attended a rave, but the reality is that the ages skew much higher. If there are teenagers under sixteen at any rave—and that's a big if—then they would be a very tiny number, not the majority.

While working on this book, I've been simultaneously uploading to YouTube archival video footage I've had in my possession from early Hullabaloos. The crowds are youthful crowds, but not children. I've never seen a child on any of the videos. The narrative that a rave is filled with fourteen-year-olds is just a common hater myth. The video evidence doesn't support it.

Also, from what I observed working the front doors of my events, some parents would arrive at 1 or 2 a.m. to pick up younger patrons and bring them home. I always thought this was a good compromise. Who says that anyone has to stay till morning? This would also ensure that these parents' kids were in fact drug-free. They'd had their fun, got to go to a big rave, and went home safe.

Based on a web poll on my website at the time, the average age of 80% of Hullabaloo rave goers was between the ages of 17 and 22, with 15% aged 23–27, and the other 5% from other age groups, both older and younger.

And as the years went on, the average age would definitely skew higher, as our fans stuck with us and younger teenagers were no longer attracted to the rave scene.

Everyone was in agreement, though, that sixteen was a good number for a minimum age, and with access to drivers' licences, they would have proof to show.

Much was said about rave flyers promoting drug use. All I could speak to were my own, which never had any sort of drug promotion.

The crown attorney tried to lay a comical argument, that the smiley faces featured on my CDs were actually ecstasy pills. I laughed in response.

"Smiley faces have been around since the 1960s."

Overall, I felt much better prepared than I felt he was. There's a saying, never ask a question you don't know the answer to, and he failed miserably. Well, certainly from the perspective that this wasn't a balanced inquest, that he was coming from the perspective that raves were bad and had no redeeming qualities.

They weren't expecting a passionate and eloquent person on the stand that day. They saw me as some sort of parasite whose explanations would be paper-thin. Instead, they got one of the best examples of what rave was.

We broke for lunch, and finally, I couldn't avoid the TV cameras anymore. Paul and Luis gave me some tips before we dealt with them.

"This is all about the sound bite; they will never show the interviewer asking the question on the news, so whatever they ask you, you give them the answer you have ready."

The three points we had ready were that promoters like myself were looking to make the events as safe as possible, that we wanted to work with the city and authorities, and that the jury needed to recommend that raves be allowed to happen on city property.

We stepped out and had the cameras in our faces. They began with their first question, and I answered clumsily. But then Paul, with his perfected "makes for good TV" experience, then answered himself in a very hot and angry manner. All great, but the camera was out of tape. They asked him to answer again, and he did it in the exact same way. This is how TV news works, folks.

We returned after lunch to continue my questioning. First came the Toronto Police lawyer. "Chris, I just want to make sure I have this correct. You said earlier quote that as the raves got bigger the wrong people started attending?"

"Uh, I didn't say that." He obviously had picked up on something I said earlier and was trying to make the quote stick out for the jury and media.

I don't think he was expecting my denial. "Uh, well, I have it written down here that you said it this morning."

"I don't think that's what I said."

"Uh, OK, Chris. Thank you."

The next lawyer was the City of Toronto lawyer. His question was comical. "Does the name Anabolic Frolic have anything to do with anabolic steroids?"

I couldn't help but laugh.

Paul Burstein was next. "Chris, earlier today, you were speaking about the music you promote and the vocals that it does have. If it pleases this inquest I would like to play a sample of one of Chris' CDs."

The chief accepted that, and Paul played a clip of Track 1 from Chapter 3, *Distant Skies*. The audience listened as the song built with strings and pianos, and finally, the beats gave way to the vocal breakdown, where the beats went away.

Paul then skipped ahead to where the two tracks mixed together, to demonstrate the DJ "mix."

"So, Chris, as we heard from that song, besides the vocals, the songs regularly stop to give the dancers a break before continuing again."

"Yes, we call that a breakdown; each song would have multiple breakdowns."

"I'd like to submit this CD as a piece of evidence for the jury to examine."

Just then, the crown attorney spoke up and interjected that he would like my CD submitted with a sheet of pictures of ecstasy pills that also had smiley faces on them. This was some tricky lawyering happening, and if it wasn't clear that this was an adversarial showdown between two sides and not a fair exploration, here was your classic example.

Paul was able to successfully shut down that motion. He made it clear that there were no drug references anywhere on the CD. Now, I can't say in the entire history of Happy2bHardcore that there isn't a song that references getting high, but in this case, for Chapter 3, it was as clean as could be.

The photos of ecstasy would be submitted separately but not attached to my CD as evidence.

I was finally off the witness stand by about 2:30 p.m., after virtually the whole day up there. The court adjourned for the day.

The media attention was intense, and I never got used to it. One of the worst articles was an opinion piece by a *Toronto Sun* columnist. She launched a scathing personal attack on me in the paper.

She described me as "pudgy" and said that I looked like a "junior accountant wannabe that lived in their mom's basement."

She took issue with the fact that I was proud of my accomplishments as a DJ and with my happy hardcore music, which she derided.

She then did some nonsense math about the money I generated. She took the uneducated stance that everyone was indeed paying $25 to sit in a dark parking garage and get high. She guessed I made $80,000—"$80,000 cash," she surmised.

I guess it shouldn't have surprised me that Revenue Canada, Canada's tax collectors, called me that same week. Either they'd read the paper or, I suspect, Detective Garrison called them to tip

them off about me. They wanted to talk to me. I ignored them for now.

Around this same time during the inquest, Garrison showed up at my door again to personally serve me with another summons, this time to appear in court over fire code violations. The charge was about not having enough exits for the number of people that were inside the building. The harassment continued. That court date wasn't until the summer, so we continued to focus our attention on the inquest.

One of the witnesses called upon by the province was Mike from Zinc Security, the guy who had rented me the parking garage.

After all that was said about this space being illegal, Mike didn't waver from the original story he had told me. That fire sprinklers had been recently installed, and the fire department had given it the all-clear. I didn't know whether he was just dumb and had bought into his own bullshit or what, but I hoped his testimony would help me with the later fire code battle.

While the inquest went on, and the media was reporting on it, City Council debated about whether raves should be allowed on city property, which included facilities like the CNE.

Councillor Olivia Chow argued that council should wait until the inquest was over, to hear the findings before making a decision.

We also gained an unlikely ally in Frances Nunziata, the councillor whose ward our parking garage was in. More than anything, it was because she was such an enemy of Mayor Mel Lastman, and he and his Chief of Police Fantino had taken a very hardline stance against raves. Mel, though, famously exclaimed at a press conference that he didn't know what a rave was—samples of which made it into an electronica song mocking the mayor.

I remember Fantino even went so far as to write Prime Minister Chretien a letter claiming that raves were threatening the very fabric of Canadian society. "If we don't deal with it effectively, we're going to have some irreversible effects for years to come and for generations to come in this country," he said in the letter.

This is all laughable now, but at the time, this was front-page news.

Halfway into the inquest, the Council voted, and raves were banned from city property. It was another blow for the scene. We had lost the biggest venue available to us, perfectly suited and safe, and the momentum of the politicians was against us.

All these years later, I think how nice it was that raves were the biggest problem the city was facing at the time. I'm sure all those councillors would love to turn back the clock to a time when kids dancing all night was the biggest issue of the day.

There was much debate during the inquest about the percentage of ravers who actually consumed drugs at a rave. Was it 80%? How about 25%? The crown attorney smartly did a bit of math, that even if we went with the 25% number that no one would contest, and applied it to a rave of 10,000 people at the CNE grounds, that's 2500 people involved in illegal activity under one room. That was a powerful argument.

Our community had regular meetings to discuss strategies at the inquest and what else could be done. Possible witnesses and experts were thrown around. We were definitely an organized machine. These fights for the freedom to dance and attend raves were happening all over North America, but I don't think a single city touched the level of involvement and organization as our Toronto scene did at this time.

From: Fatty Matty McPLuR
To: All

I've been to 12 Hullabaloo Parties. My first one, Love & Magic, literally changed my life. Here's my story:

I was a scary looking, Manson worshipping little goth kiddee, and a friend dragged me kicking and screaming to a "rave". I had no idea what to expect, I'd seen like, a bunch of blue wigged freaks down-town, and didn't want anything to do with it.

If anyone was at Hulla that night and saw that angry looking, black haired goth kid, with all my make-ups on, I have to say thank you.

That party was the best thing ever to happen to me, I was within days of suicide, and I can honestly tell you love changed me.

I fell instantly in love with Hullabaloo and partying in general, Everyone walked up to me said hey, gave me a glow show (I wasn't on anything, but it was still cool!) I couldn't believe people were socializing with the scary kid in the corner!

Anyway, it saved my life, and made me the party freak I am today.

Thank you Chris. You literally saved my life.

(Posted to the HullaBoard)

chapter 47

ROBIN GETS WORSE

Simultaneous with the inquest, about a week into it, Robin's depression was becoming unmanageable. She had tried over half a dozen antidepressants over the last year and a half, and none of them worked. Worse, each one had terrible withdrawal, and she would have to go several weeks between getting off the last one and when the effects of a new pill could be measured.

The only thing that worked at all was the tranquilizers. Robin would be crying uncontrollably in bed, that she couldn't escape her feelings, and only after taking a few of these would she calm down and go to sleep. It wasn't much of a life.

Finally, one day, Robin came to me with uncontrolled tears.

"Chris, I can't be left alone. I can't stand living like this. I know I'm going to kill myself. Please help me."

She was in a lot of trouble; it would be clear to anyone just by looking at her. I didn't know what to do.

"What do you want me to do?" I asked her.

"I should go to the hospital. I'm afraid to be by myself."

Not far from where we lived was the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) hospital. It was as good a place as any to go. I called a taxi to take us there.

All Robin could do was try to rock herself in the back of the taxi as I put my arm around her to try to calm her.

Robin was an American citizen with no status or health coverage in Canada, but we had to try something. We went into Admitting and asked to talk to someone.

Before long, we were taken into an office and were seated opposite three people I assumed were doctors. They asked Robin some questions. She felt hopeless. After all the meds she had tried, she had not gotten better. She couldn't continue to live like this. She had devised a way to kill herself.

"How would you do it?"

"I'm not telling," she answered. I would learn later that a suicidal person who won't tell you how they are planning to kill themselves is very dangerous. They took this threat very seriously as well.

It was Friday afternoon. They told Robin they'd be willing to take her in, that she'd get the help she needed and would be out of danger. We couldn't turn down their offer. She was in big trouble.

"But I'm American. I have no health coverage."

"Don't worry about that."

The doctors made some phone calls to arrange a bed for Robin, and she was soon whisked up to the ward. I think she was a bit relieved and also a bit scared, but at least we knew she would live through the weekend.

She was taken upstairs to a secured ward. She was going to be put on 24-hour suicide watch. Since it was Friday, there would be no doctors or therapy, but just some nurses to care for her and the dozen other women in the ward.

We said our goodbyes, and Boshira, one of the doctors—whom I later learned was not a doctor but a therapist—promised to come check on Robin during the weekend on his own time.

I was let out a secured door that locked the ward off and prevented anyone from sneaking out. I started bawling my eyes out as I walked home.

I didn't know what I could do; I didn't know how to help Robin. I felt completely alone. I cried uncontrollably in the street, unable to stop, even though I was in public.

I had had some experience with mental illness and depression. My mother suffered from depression her whole life, and during a Christmas only a few years earlier, she had had some sort of mental breakdown and I'd had to take her to the hospital Emergency Department, where she'd spent two weeks in the psychiatric ward.

The inner Freud in me obviously can make a connection between having a sick mother and then having a girlfriend who was also sick. Make of that what you will, but I guess, in my defence, I would say that the Robin I met and fell in love with was not sick, and now that she was sick, I couldn't abandon her.

I could barely sleep that night. I thought of Robin in that psych ward alone and not at home with me. But at least I knew she would be alive in the morning.

The next day, I went there at noon. I was buzzed through the security doors and went to look for Robin. I walked to the bedroom where they had put her last night and saw her lying on her side, rocking herself and whimpering. How long had she been there like that? I had no idea, but it was the saddest sight I had ever seen.

"Robin?" I whispered. "It's me."

"Oh Chris." Robin turned and put her arms up, and she pulled me into bed with her. But her watcher immediately had me leave the bed. Robin had a 24-hour suicide watcher tailing her everywhere she went. It was a Jamaican lady, who seemed nice enough, just doing her job. She had some knitting in her hands and would just set up shop six feet from wherever Robin would be.

We went to the lounge so we could talk. Robin wasn't having a good time in there and wanted to go home, but the orders were to keep her for three days, until Monday. As miserable as she was

there, she still was probably a danger to herself, so as tough as it was, she had to stay.

Boshira, the therapist we had seen the day before, arrived to check up on her. Robin pleaded her case that she should go home now, but it wasn't his call. He also explained, "I've had people die on me in the past. I can't tell you how much of a downer it is."

As much as it sucked for her to be there, she had to stay.

Making matters worse, the head nurse was exactly like Nurse Ratched from the movie, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. She had a real cold way about her. She had obviously been in this position for way too long and had lost any sort of empathy or soft touch that would have made staying in such a place a little easier.

The other people staying in the ward were a mix of all different kinds of women. Most seemed to be really struggling. The woman Robin shared her room with seemed to have no short-term memory and would repeatedly ask where she was and who these people were.

After visiting with Robin for a while, I went home. But Robin called me at home around dinnertime. "I'm coming home now."

"What, they're letting you go?"

"Well, I'm done with this place, and I'm ready to go home."

"Um, did they say you can do that?"

"Chris, you put me in here, so now you get me out of it!"

My heart sank. I had no idea what was going on or what to do. I walked back to the hospital.

As I entered past the security door of the ward, I could see Robin waiting for me in a chair, dressed in her street clothes. She turned to Nurse Ratched at the main nursing station and said, "OK, I'm leaving now."

Ratched responded coldly, "You're not going anywhere."

"Let me the fuck out of here!" Robin screamed.

"You can't go anywhere until the doctor sees you on Monday."

Robin began to cry again, and my heart felt sore. I didn't know what I could do. I visited with Robin a little bit and then had to leave her there once again.

I went home wondering how I was going to get Robin out. My mind raced; I wondered if I could call the American Consulate and tell them one of their citizens was being held against their will. My mind raced to even more ridiculous thoughts, wondering if I could get a gun somewhere and break her out.

The only thing we could do was wait it out until Monday and hope that she could get out.

Early on Monday morning, I received a phone call from Robin.

"I'm coming home, they let me out."

"Really?"

"Yup, I'm taking a taxi now."

Fifteen minutes later, Robin came through the door. She had told the doctor that morning that she was feeling bad because of everything that we were going through with the inquest, but she had realized it and was no longer suicidal.

This quack had accepted that ridiculous explanation and let her go. On one hand, I was happy that Robin was out, but on the other hand, she had been in real bad shape on Friday. She did seem better today, certainly out of danger, but I wondered what the hell kind of operation they were running down there.

I was emotionally and physically drained. Going through the inquest was bad enough, but having this roller coaster with Robin did me in completely.

I withdrew from everybody. I hardly participated in the rest of the inquest. No one knew the reason why. I'm sharing it now for the first time. I had nothing left in me.

From: E Buddah
To: Anabolic Frolic

Whats up dude. I'm gonna try to make this as brief as possible. I can't tell you how sorry I am about what's happened. It's incredibly unfair that you are taking the blame again for a death that wasn't your fault.

I've heard talk recently about Hulla calling it quits and taking one for the team but I'm begging you not to. My first Hulla was simply the best party and one of the best nights of my life. I haven't missed Hulla since then and don't plan on it in the future. I just want you to know that the vibe at a Hullabaloo can't be matched by any party or any experience. If the heat starts coming down really hard there's lots of people who will stand up and support you all the way.

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 48

THE INQUEST ENDS

★

I am grateful there was such a well-organized and motivated team there to fight the good fight, even if I ghosted on everyone. The rave scene wasn't a dismal crack house; these were passionate people that were willing to fight for something they believed in. Even though I was the subject of it, everyone rallied, and it wasn't just my own fight. I will forever be thankful for their efforts.

After the crown attorney finished calling his witnesses and experts, the rave scene, through the TDSC lawyer and through my own lawyer, called dozens of our own witnesses to frame the rave scene better and more wholly.

Everyone from individual ravers to Alex D, editor of the monthly *Tribe* magazine. The media had to report on something every day, so our message was getting out there. The media war was starting to tip.

Finally, after three weeks of testimony, witnesses, and experts, it was time to wrap it up. Each lawyer made their own suggestions as to what recommendations the jury should come up with.

We suggested that the existing TDSC rules should be ratified. That the police shouldn't be able to arbitrarily decide their numbers to effectively kill an event off. That appropriate and legal spaces such as the CNE grounds should be made available for

raves. That raves should be encouraged to operate in a safe and legal manner.

The jury deliberated for two days, and finally came back with their list of recommendations.

I heard the news on the radio. I had stopped attending the inquest from my own personal burnout.

Their list was almost verbatim what we had suggested, which included almost all the existing TDSC guidelines.

Some of the main points were:

- They recommended that raves be allowed to continue in safe, legal venues including city property (specifically the CNE).
- A permitting system could be implemented following the TDSC guidelines.
- Ages should be restricted to 16+.
- No suggestive drug elements on flyers.
- The location should be disclosed on flyers and tickets.
- Events should be promoted as "drug-free."
- Paid-duty police should be the subject of general regulatory guidelines (controversially, ultimately the police can name their number or not at all).
- Raves could be inspected and/or closed down if in violation.
- They recommended legislatures consult with the rave community when developing laws.
- "Harm reduction" methods should be used in addition to "just say no."

The *National Post* reported the inquest as "a remarkably adversarial hearing that was more trial than public inquiry." It had

been that way for me since the beginning. It was hard to see this as anything other than a trial, so for the jury to get to understand what we were about and support our view of safety, rather than banning, it felt like a victory.

Five regular citizens, the jurors, listened to all the testimony and evidence. They came into this knowing nothing and had no biases or agendas. I'll acknowledge that we, the rave scene, had our own biases. But they came back with suggestions that were already very close to what we had come up with on our own.

Months of hard work, planning, and strategizing—we all fought hard to rescue a scene that we all loved and cared about. That's what the opponents initially didn't understand and underestimated—that there was a real community here of caring people. This was not a crack house with repetitive electronic beats playing in the background.

The media reported it as a victory for raves. The crown attorney tried to spin this, claiming that someone was dead, and we were celebrating. But we weren't celebrating the death of Allan Ho or that we got away with something. We had mourned him. I and everyone else experienced real trauma. It was devastating, but you pick up the pieces and move on.

We were celebrating because this inquest had turned into something else. We survived an attack on an entire community.

Should we be demonized and outlawed because of what had happened to a single person? We didn't think so. That's what we celebrated.

As I prepared this book and went through the old news articles, I came across a quote from Allan Ho's mother, Mui Phuong Ho, at the conclusion of the inquest.

"Everything at raves should be safe for the kids," she had said in an interview.

This quote really struck me. It would have been totally understandable if she had misdirected anger at me and raves, blaming them for her son's death, saying that they should be criminalized. I certainly found myself on the receiving end of a lot of anger from all types of people. I was commended on my bravery in speaking honestly at the inquest, but here I am, awed by Mui Phuong Ho's own bravery in the aftermath of having lost her son.

Throughout my entire journey as a rave promoter, I learned and adopted things for the betterment of the experience and of my patrons. I would continue to learn from this.

The inquest was a significant battle won, but there was still a larger war going on.

From: IvanQFrostbite
To: All

I came around the corner and saw a group of ravers standing in the square. It really didn't hit me that we were about to go to Hulla. It was like a dream. This was more than just my first Hulla. It was my first party in two years, and it was something I desperately needed. When I finally got inside and was stamped and hugged, I was…overwhelmed. As soon as I got inside, something came over me and I remembered why I had started raving. It was amazing to be in a room full of people who all loved the music that I hold to dear to my heart.

Since I have been back, my friends have noticed a change in me. I am more childlike and when I listen to hardcore I am bouncy. Hulla was a very healing experience for me. I have been dealing with a lot of drama in my life. Dancing my heart out and trading kandi, meeting new people and collecting gifts helped me remember that there is great happiness in life and my energy was through the roof.

I have been happier since the party, and I think that I will continue to get happier. I am back in raver mode and I regained that missing self-confidence and I became more outgoing because of Hulla. I am still in the clouds over it and I have been looking at pictures over and over remembering the party.

Thank you to everyone who made my first Hulla experience a great one. I haven't come down yet, and I probably won't. So thank you all.

(Posted to the HullaBoard)

chapter 49

IDANCE

During the inquest, at one of the TDSC-related community meetings, Kim Stanford suggested we form groups to achieve individual tasks that had to be accomplished as one of goals during this battle. One of the committees was to develop some sort of protest for City Hall. In very short order, the committee formed, and the iDance name came from that first meeting.

I have to give credit to that group for the great iDance name. This was spring of 2000, and Apple's iPod would not be released until October 2001. In fact, its name had most likely not even been announced, signaling the start of the "iCraze," when we came up with our name. Once again, the ravers were ahead of the curve.

iDance was conceived as a protest to take place at Toronto's City Hall. It was to accomplish two goals: 1) to influence and hopefully reverse the vote by the city, to once again allow raves to take place on city property, like the CNE, as per the coroner's inquest recommendations and 2) as a public relations goal, to be rave's "coming out" party, for the rest of Toronto and the country to see that we aren't something to be afraid of—that there was a community here far bigger and far more vibrant than what the news had reported up to that point.

As the inquest wrapped up and we celebrated our victory of sorts, the momentum was with us to press on with the iDance rally. August 1, 2000, was the available date to get suitable permits to assemble at Nathan Phillips Square, in front of Toronto City Hall.

One of the chief architects of iDance was my friend, Klubmasta Will. He told me Councillor Olivia Chow gave the group some great advice early on. She said, "Nothing matters more than the number of bodies you get out. Use every trick in your arsenal to get as many people as possible out to City Hall that day. Get every big-named DJ you can, play every card you have, because the only thing that matters are the potential votes your group represents."

Most political rallies at City Hall might get a couple of hundred people, and even that would not be insignificant. Their points were made.

With that in mind, the strategy was to promote iDance as not just a protest but as the biggest rave there ever was. Now, who wouldn't want to party out in the sunshine on the steps of City Hall? How cool would that be?

International DJs from the UK and USA who were touring through the area volunteered their services to play, since Toronto had been so good for their careers. A handful of Toronto locals were also booked to represent, including myself.

Flyers were printed with the slogan, "It's about freedom to dance."

High-profile speakers were also booked to speak to the crowds, including Barbara Hall, the former mayor of Toronto, civil rights lawyer Allan Young, and others. Toronto favorite and radio personality Don Berns, better known as Dr. Trance, would emcee the event.

The HullaBoard and other rave message boards of the day were lit on fire by the discussion of the upcoming iDance rally.

There would be a stage for the DJs, and big sound, and it would run from 4 p.m. till 10 p.m.

My set was scheduled for 6:15 p.m. Klubmasta Will specifically wanted the strategy of having my set on when the live-eye news trucks would most likely be taking a peek at the rally. He wanted the cameras to see the whistles, the singing, the hands in the air, and the energy that my sets were known for.

We had no idea how many people might attend, but we hoped it would be big. We just didn't know how big would it be.

The reality with municipal politics is that some of these councillors had won their seats by only a couple of hundred votes. If the impression was made that there was a large number of disenfranchised voters out there, any politician worth their salt would cave in to the changing winds.

The day of iDance hit, and it was big. Really big. City workers estimated the turnout at 20,000 people.

I worked my way to the stage and gazed out at an ocean of people. I've been privileged to play some big audiences in my day all over the world, but this doubled the single largest crowd I had ever performed in front of.

My trusty MC E-by-gum was there, but for the optics of the event, he operated under his real name, John Smith. We took the stage and played a truncated thirty-minute set, but I dropped some bombs that would be sure to get the crowd going, like the perennial hit, "Eye Opener."

It was truly a historic set at a historic event.

Dr. Trance would come on the microphone and report that many city councillors were watching from their office windows. Some councillors wanted in on the festivities and declared their change of heart right there and then.

The news was positive, the TV was with us, and the press were finally were changing their tune. The lone exception was the police mouthpiece, the *Toronto Sun*, which reported that there had been some drug arrests on the site. They just could never give an inch.

It didn't matter, though. The public relations war was being won. City councillors were shaking in their boots with signs like "Ravers are Voters" being held up in the crowd. It was just too many people. Two weeks later, the City would reverse its ban on raves on city property. We won, or at least, it felt like we did that day.

It seemed like things were looking up in many ways. Robin continued to struggle with her mental illness while trying medication after medication and seeing a therapist, but we also had a lot of good times. We really were inseparable. We were definitely one of those couples you always see together; we didn't have separate lives. Robin was always with me at my gigs or outside flyering with me. At home, we would spend all our time together, usually cramped in a small apartment, but we didn't mind.

One of our apartments was walking distance to Lake Ontario, so we often would walk to the beach there and feed the ducks and geese. On one trip, I remember, we played on the swing sets coming home. Really enjoying the moment and having fun, with huge laughter and smiles on our faces.

Our being night owls, our schedule usually ended with going to bed around 9 a.m. most mornings. On the Comedy Network at that time was the imported British version of the show, *Whose Line is it Anyway?* Watching that show and having some good laughs together was how we ended our days.

Being from California, Robin regularly underdressed for the cold Canadian nights when we stood outside flyering. Her lips would be blue and shivering. With her lack of cold resistance, she

really should have been dressed in warm winter gear instead of trying to attract attention in rave attire or other attention-getting outfits.

I had a lot of downtime if there was no Hullabaloo imminent. Outside of DJing on the weekends and handing out flyers, there would be a lot of spare hours. Robin and I often spent those hours playing video games together. At the time, the Nintendo 64 was our primary system. We would spend weeks together on the couch, working on the latest *Legend of Zelda* or *Resident Evil* game. I would be in charge of the controller, and she would give her input on where I should go or what I should do next. Robin was also great at puzzles, so I would defer to her when trying to figure them out.

Around this time, I was booked for a gig in Pittsburgh and decided to drive down with Robin. It was around a five-hour drive, basically a nice afternoon drive. The sun was up and brilliant, the air was warm. We lowered our windows to let the air blast through the car, the wind whipping Robin's hair around. Happy2bHardcore Chapter 4 was playing on the sound system. Robin had her eyes closed, the wind blowing, the sun and warmth hitting her. The bass of "Elysium" from Chapter 4 throbbed, giving way to its beautiful piano breakdown.

"I want to live," Robin said. "I am so happy right now."

It was a relief to hear Robin say this. It seemed like she had hope, and that gave me hope.

From: JAREB
To: Anabolic Frolic

If this letter ever finds its way to Anabolic, I want to tell you thank you from the bottom of my heart. I saw you spin at freaky 2 in Hartford, Connecticut and it was my first chance to see you live.

I love your mixes and am a huge fan of yours, I went to that party to see you. I have to tell you that you actually had me in tears….of pure bliss!!!!!!!!!!! Seriously. I was that touched by your music. I can only hope that I will have the chance to see you again.

^^*PLUR*^*^*

(Sent by E-mail)

part seven

SPECIAL WHEN LIT

chapter 50

BANNED IN THE USA

With the inquest happening and a distinct lack of large legal venues, I shelved the idea of having our third anniversary on the traditional date of late June.

My popularity as a DJ had never been bigger. Happy2bHardcore Chapter 4 had just been released, and this time I was paid significantly more for it, relatively big money for a DJ mix. The true value in those CDs, though, was the promotion of my name. Anabolic Frolic was synonymous with happy hardcore throughout the U.S. and Canada. I was the only happy hardcore DJ whose name transcended the music and scene. Everyone knew me even if they weren't a fan of the music.

The series had been selling hundreds of thousands of copies at this point, a bona fide mega-hit with no mainstream coverage or support. I was outselling most big-named European electronica stars, and the *LA Times* reported me as the third-best-selling electronic artist, period. I didn't get much respect outside my rabid fan base, but that was fine by me.

I was the only hardcore DJ to get booked to play main rooms of large non-hardcore-related events. I began to make this a requirement of my bookings; it was main room or nothing. I felt I owed it to my music to use my clout as a DJ to promote the music in the best way possible. I wasn't going to be marginalized in some

second or third room. I played the main room every time and rocked the house.

One of the biggest events I had played at that time was an event called Whistle 3 in Philadelphia, a mega party with over 12,000 people in attendance. Upon arriving there, I was notified that I'd be playing the main room in the middle of the night, following some very big DJs of that era.

For the first time in a long time, I was a little nervous. Well, a lot. I thought to myself, "Well, I'm finally going to prove whether I belong in these main rooms or not." I knew I would have fans up front, but the question was, would I connect to the entire mass of 12,000 people outside of an event in my hometown?

The question was nullified in the first five seconds. I had the place with the first seconds of the lead song from Chapter 4, which samples the *2001: A Space Odyssey* theme. From there, I just took over, and the place went apeshit. Yeah, I belonged in the main room. And I would never agree to play a secondary or tertiary room ever again.

I would hear for years after from people who saw me at that event. Unfortunately, it would be one of the last US raves I would ever play.

My DJ appearance schedule was also happening, though. The rave scene was experiencing a peak just about everywhere in the US at the same time. Most weekends, I was travelling somewhere new.

However, the US doesn't have a workable work visa for entertainers such as myself—unlike Canada, where for $150 and a rubber stamp, any international DJ can come and perform, including those coming from the US.

To work in the US, they only allowed "artists of international reputation," and despite my reputation and accomplishments within my genre, they didn't care about that. Those rules existed

for people like the Rolling Stones and current pop stars. I wasn't a radio hit guy with videos on MTV. The paperwork also didn't lend itself to someone like myself, who would get booked by a different promoter at a different venue for each gig. Their rules applied more to a large concert tour that was planned several months in advance by a single promoter.

That being the case, I skirted the rules. I wouldn't tell the customs guards my real reason for entering the US; I was merely a visitor. I'll be the first to admit that in the pre-9/11 world, the border wasn't taken very seriously, at least not by myself. Driving across as a Canadian often meant you showed no ID at all and would be waved through with the most basic of interviews. The world and that border has changed since then, but during that time, this was seen as no big deal at all.

So, for every trip to the US, I had a suitable cover story. My first trouble happened when I was scheduled to fly to Denver. I was to be in Denver for less than 24 hours before flying home. This made the border guards very suspicious. They pulled me in for secondary questioning.

Had I planned things out a little better, I might have gotten through this OK, but with no fear in advance of trouble, I didn't have a suitable cover story.

"Why are you going to Denver?"

"To visit a friend."

"How do you know this person?"

"From the internet."

"Do you have a phone number or way to reach him?"

This was where my plan fell apart. I did have the number of the promoter, but I didn't want to give it up, because the promoter on the other end wasn't aware of anything special he was supposed to say.

"So you're telling me you're flying to Denver, for one night, to meet someone you've never met before, and you don't even have a phone number for them?"

Yeah, I know, that sounded terrible hearing it, and once again writing it. They let me sit. Two guards were tag teaming, doing a good cop/bad cop on me, and you know what? It works. After the stress of the tough guy, it was a relief to have the nice one come back in, and you wanted to work it out.

"Who bought the ticket?"

Here's where I slipped up again.

"They did."

They jumped immediately on the word "they." These guards probably assumed I was some sort of drug mule at this point. Realizing this, I figured I'd better come clean.

Their attitude lightened up once it became apparent that I was just a kid with records, going to spin at a party. Problem was, I still had to have a work visa clearance to do so. They'd be turning me back. I wasn't going anywhere.

After that incident, I found a semi-workable solution in that I would tell them that I was making an appearance in that local market to promote my CDs, often on local radio. They would arrange an interview with me, and I'd have documents showing this.

That was all fine until I let my guard down again that August. I was booked for a small club gig in Buffalo, New York, just a 90-minute drive from Toronto. I had arranged for the promoters to meet me on the Canadian side to pick up my records and take them across separately. I'd then drive across with a friend, Rick, saying we were spending the night and would do some shopping the next day.

My driver and I were late getting out there to begin with, and then there was some confusion with the promoters about where exactly they were going to meet me. The hours went by. I had a

sick feeling in my stomach that night. Everything in me told me to just give up and go home, but we hung around, hoping to connect with the promoters. I didn't want to let the fans down who were waiting for me at the club.

By the time I connected with them to give them my records, it was past 1 a.m. We then followed them across the border. Their car passed through quickly, and now it was our turn.

The border guard poked his head in the window and asked our purpose of travel. We told him we were spending the night and doing some shopping. He then asked if either of us had been turned away at the border before. I decided not to lie, and said I had been. He immediately took our IDs and sent us in for questioning.

Rick and I were immediately split up and sent to different rooms. I sat in front a big bald US immigration guard. He started peppering me with questions.

"Where are you staying?"

"The Holiday Inn." That was where the club promoter had arranged for me to stay.

He left and then came back pissed off.

"I just called them, and there's no room reserved for you there, so you better start telling me the truth!"

Later on, I would find out that the promoter had booked me under the name Anabolic Frolic, not my real name, so that's why the border guard didn't find it.

I froze under his questioning, not knowing what more to say.

"Well, until you're ready to talk, you're just going to cool off in here." He then led me to a tiny holding cell, about the size of a large closet. There was a single bench to sit on and no toilet.

If the purpose of putting me in the cell was to make me sweat, it worked. I had never been locked away for any reason in my life. For all the stress I've been through, it's never been from a criminal

issue. I've never been arrested. But for the first time in my life, my freedom was taken from me.

He had me sit in there for a couple of hours. The club gig was over now. There was nothing left to rescue.

Worse, Robin had gotten into trouble during her last entry into Canada after visiting her parents. She had spent too much time in Canada as a visitor, and they gave her an exit date of August 30, two days from now. I wondered if I'd be let out in time to see her off. I knew that US customs was above the law; regular criminal law didn't apply. I had no rights. They could hold me for a couple of weeks for no reason.

I was stuck in this cell in the dead of night. The border wasn't busy that night, and I could hear the guards talking amongst themselves outside, killing time.

Finally Bald Bull let me out.

"Are you ready to talk?"

I just wanted to get the hell out of there and go home, so I came clean. This would be a costly mistake.

He wrote down my confession and had me sign it. At that point, I sealed my fate. Because I had been caught once before and this was a second offence, with that signed confession, they were able to apply some new powers against me. I'd be banned from entering the US for five years. There was no appeal. I wished I had listened to my gut that night and had just gone home.

And that was that. Anabolic Frolic was banned in the USA. I called some immigration lawyers that week to see if anything could be done, if there was any way to salvage the upcoming gigs I had on my calendar. There wouldn't be. I'd had to give them my pound of flesh.

Robin left Canada on schedule as she was ordered, but we tried a trick to get her back in. She flew back from California to Buffalo, New York, and drove across with her friend Dave, who drove

from Toronto to Buffalo to pick her up. The driving border was much easier, with no passports required. She was waved through, with an automatic six-month visa issued to her once again.

In later years, I would spend several thousand dollars on lawyer fees to try to find a legitimate way back into the US to work as a DJ. There wasn't. There was no workable way for me to get in, and I wasn't going to lie any more to get across. My fans in the US would just have to come to Canada.

From: TRUE HARDCORE
To: Anabolic Frolic

STAY BANNED YOU SHITTY FUCK!!!!!!!!!! You will never be as good as the uk djs so get a grip! YOU FUCK

(Posted on the Internet)

chapter 51

HARASSMENT KEEPS COMING

The inquest was over, but it seemed my good buddy Detective Garrison still had a hard-on for me. They wanted some blame to land at my feet. Someone had died, an unfortunate accident that the inquest and community worked towards trying to ensure wouldn't happen again, but that wasn't good enough.

I guess it was decided somewhere that I had to be nailed with something, and they found it—fire code infractions from View to a Thrill.

The main charge they came up with was that there were not enough fire exits for the number of people we had. The rule of the law dictates a certain number of fire exits for however many people the occupancy is. These have to be proper fire doors; things like a garage door don't count. That garage door was actually open for ventilation during the night, but it didn't matter.

I was once again personally served the summons by Detective Garrison. It is highly unusual, if not completely unheard of, to have a cop deliver a court summons for a fire code charge.

He seemed to relish delivering these things to me. I can recall being in bed with Robin during the early afternoon. After all, we

were night owls who worked throughout the nights. A loud *rap rap rap* came from the door.

Having learned our lessons last time about answering the door, we ignored it.

The rapping continued and continued. Loud, forceful knocks. They were obviously meant to wear you down. *Rap rap rap*, they continued. I closed my bedroom door to stifle the noise. *Rap rap rap*.

I could then hear voices in the hallway. I suspect this loud knocking got the attention of the building superintendent. Some more voices. Then more knocking. *Rap rap rap*, it continued.

But I was hardened. No amount of attempting to wear me down was going to work that day. Finally, it ceased.

Later, when I woke again, I opened the door to see Detective Garrison's business card stuck to the door. He literally left his calling card.

I asked my lawyer, Paul, to call him. I was never going to talk to this guy again. We learned of the new charges.

Now, the fact of the matter was that the exits never came into play at that event. Everyone got in safely and out without issue. Based on that, a typical first-time infraction, it would be a $1000 fine.

That would be if this was a normal case. It wasn't, of course. Paul Burstein offered to represent me for this case, but I would be paying him this time, and days in court cost money. I had no choice. He called the prosecuting attorney to see what they had in mind.

Their plea bargain was a fine of $17,000 and to have me personally plead guilty—not just the corporation. This was their PLEA BARGAIN for a first-time infraction, where no one had gotten hurt from anything having to do with fire code. They were out for blood. They wanted to get me for something.

The fine was one thing, but a personal guilty plea would mean that this would follow me forever. If I ever had fire code issues in the future, I would be a double offender. Since I had every intention of continuing in this business, I'd be leaving myself wide open to any sort of problem. What if they wanted to continue with their harassment and showed up at one of my very legal venues, and then spotted a light bulb that was burned out on an exit sign and nailed me with secondary infractions? I had no choice but to fight.

This battle would be fought at the municipal courts in old Toronto City Hall. The courts were hearing everything from a case where a dog that attacked a child and had to be put down to restaurant health code violations.

Paul initially tried to have the charges thrown out on a technicality. The charge against me was under a section of code about unsafe conditions, which they were using as a catch-all to include the fire doors. Paul argued that the fire code includes specific charges for the fire doors, and if that was the issue, that was what the charge should have been made for. Since fire doors exist as a separate charge, this unsafe conditions charge shouldn't include that element, rendering their unsafe conditions charge without any basis.

The justice unfortunately dismissed his argument, and the case proceeded.

Because of the stakes of our case, it would become very large, with many of the same witnesses called as from the inquest. Right away, we ran into scheduling problems with trying a case like this in the municipal courts. They had so many cases on the docket, they ran out of time to hear much about my case. Court was adjourned and was scheduled for a follow-up two months later.

This would happen again and again. We would show up in court, only have an hour or two of time available, and would then

have to continue at another date, usually months down the road. I personally felt bad for anyone stuck in this kind of court limbo who didn't have the money to defend themselves properly. I should have felt bad for myself being stuck in this legal purgatory.

We had a middle-aged lady justice of the peace preside over the case, and when it came my time to testify, I noticed, seated in the witness box, that her "notes" consisted of nothing but doodles and stars that she scribbled during my testimony. We already had had a few different court dates, and I wondered what, if anything, she was retaining from the previous testimony on those dates.

This did not instil much confidence in our court system.

During my testimony, Paul introduced for the first time, as a piece of evidence, my rental contract with the venue. This had never previously been shared with the police.

In hindsight, I wonder whether not sharing that document helped or hurt me. It probably wouldn't have stopped the police for one second in harassing me, but it did make clear that I was renting the space for a rave, that I was not disingenuous with the rental, and that the contract itself stated that they would make sure all fire exits were signed properly, showing some responsibility for that.

As I write this now, I wonder if this contract would have better served me if I'd shared it publicly on the internet for the media to view. All along, most of this battle had been a media war for hearts and minds. This contract clearly showed that the venue had been rented to me for a rave. I think it could have changed the discussion somewhat away from me as being some supposed parasite, but as I write this, it is all long-finished history.

Court was adjourned again. This thing would just never wrap up. I knew how much money it was all costing me, and I wondered how much it was costing the city, between their lawyers, police and fire department people who were attending, and court

costs. This seemed like such a colossal waste of money, all because they wanted very badly to nail me.

Finally, we had a stroke of good luck. After nearly a year of fighting this and after several court dates, the justice of the peace didn't show up for court that day.

As per the rules of municipal court, when that happens, the charges are dropped, very similar to when you are fighting a traffic ticket and the cop doesn't show up.

I didn't know quite how to feel about this, since we had invested so much time and energy into it, but I accepted the victory however we got it. The problem was, the fire department and police weren't going to give up just yet.

Months later, I was walking home and saw some authorities across the street from my apartment building. A man in black walked across the street and served me with papers. I recognized him; he was the fire chief, personally serving me with new charges. They were not giving up.

I visited with Paul to show him the new summons, and Paul spotted a small but important detail that had changed. The new summons named the incorporated company that I had been throwing the Hulla events under, the original Nokturnal Music Inc., not naming me personally, as the first charges had done. We might have something here.

On the next trial date, I didn't attend, on Paul's orders. He went in to represent the corporation. He then entered a guilty plea for the corporation, which, in turn, was fined $10,000.

Here's the thing. Nokturnal Music Inc. was a corporation on paper, with no assets. It was a leftover from my record business that I used for liability protection reasons when signing contracts. The company had no assets or money. It could take the hit, and owe the fine, a fine that would never be paid, because the company had no assets to take.

I was saved from a personal guilty charge, so I was off free and clear. Nokturnal Music Inc. would cease operations as of that day. It would never again do business. Future business would be under a new corporation.

I still paid hefty legal fees over that year to defend myself, so I felt no guilt whatsoever in having this charge evaporate on a technicality like this. Maybe this was their strategy all along, to burden me with fighting this, no matter what the outcome.

Either way, the final chapter was closed on the events of View to a Thrill. There would be no new charges; the inquest was behind us. It was time to move on.

Looking back at all I'd gone through with the inquest and the trial, I realize that my beneficial malfunction was what allowed me to ignore the incredible pressure I was dealing with. I could compartmentalize the stress and anxiety and the financial hardships and remain focused on what was important to me, the music and raves themselves.

Looking back, I suspect that if I hadn't done this, I would have given up, many times over.

As I reflect on this period of time, as I write this and see it on the page, I am stunned by what I went through. My memory of this was that I was really good at avoiding thinking of all the hard stuff. I only cared about my mission, and it was paramount that I continue my mission. The beneficial malfunction was working.

If I could do it again, I suppose one of the changes I would make would be not to soldier on alone as I did, to pull in more help from people, including professional help from experts. To unload and share more about what it was at the time that I kept bottled up. I had learned from an early age not to ask for help, not to risk anger. I wonder what might have been possible doing things another way?

Probably the only alternative way to have gone was not to be a rave promoter and only to be a DJ. To be focused on that. There's a reason why so many rave promoters have failed; it's a hard business.

But I became a rave promoter because there was a need. A need I filled unlike anyone else that ever did it. I can't imagine how different things would have been without a Hullabaloo in the world at that time.

From: Kylefabulous
To: All

To me, Hulla is an escape. The ultimate anti-reality. A utopian oasis where people of all sorts and sizes come together, to get their drink of life… it is a gathering place, of like-minded individuals. Where u can unite, unreserved, and dance fiercely with your brothers and sisters.

Hulla has an amazing magnetic force which gives 'it' the ability to draw in the newest most curious ravers as well as the most bitchy board-bound jaded party kids out there. It is an outlet for people who love their music. In history there has never been a promotion that I have encountered that is as well known as Hulla… and for the right reasons… IT IS THE ULTIMATE RAVE PARTY.

(Posted to the HullaBoard)

chapter 52

HULLA RETURNS

Following the events of the inquest and that summer, it was time to have another Hullabaloo. I swore never again to be caught without a venue. I also wanted to follow the jury recommendation of the venue being announced on the flyer—no more secret venues. I had to secure the venue as job one before anything else happened.

That didn't leave a lot of choices. A lot of venues had been scared away from hosting raves; they just didn't want the business. Places like the International Centre were in the neighboring Peel Region, and the change of heart by Toronto city councillors had no pull on Peel Region. That venue was still lost forever.

I really had one choice, to return to the Docks. They were once again closed for the season, starting in October, and were available for special events. I was still owed my refund from our cancelled event, and I was able to apply that against the rental. Good thing, because Funtopia 3 would become my most expensive event ever.

Even though we were a few months late, I invoked the name of our birthday event. I created a very colorful flyer proclaiming our glorious return to the scene. That part was easy; operating in the post-inquest rave scene was more difficult.

There was no threat from the police this time to arrest me, but they had a large paid-duty requirement: fifteen cops, an average

of one per 200 patrons, far higher than the TDSC proposed one cop for every 500 people. But I had no control and ate the $7,500 they would charge me to allow my event to continue legally.

Security requirements for the Docks had also risen significantly. That cost me another $7,500. Fifteen thousand dollars in security for an event of 2,500 people, $6 from every ticket sold.

Security would conduct searches outside the building. The police mostly sat on their trunks observing. They couldn't legally conduct a search unless they had probable cause, and they would have to follow procedures.

We were back in fine form, however—well executed, and the vibe was intense. There wasn't a single bad review on the internet, which says something.

We even had a return of our chill tent, featuring ambient and experimental musical artists performing all night. A classic chill room, a throwback to the early days. It would be the last time Toronto would ever see anything like that.

It was a glorious return, but the police had to keep playing their games.

The next day, one of the Toronto newspapers carried an article saying that a dozen people were arrested for drugs at the weekend rave. The police obviously sent out a press release with their own spin.

What was never said in this article was that the promoter, me, was working with the police, had hired them to be there, that they had a huge number of cops, and with all of those resources, they still only arrested a dozen people out of thousands over a ten-hour period. Fifteen cops, ten hours, and twelve arrests. It was literally less than one arrest per cop over ten hours. Or another way to say it—150 man-hours of police generated twelve arrests.

No, of course they're not going to say that. The same old axe to grind.

Chief Fantino would speak out publicly to say that he didn't even recognize the TDSC guidelines. Whatever—I mean, sure, we had no power to dictate police policy to him, but he was making it clear he had no desire to work in a positive manner in any way with rave promoters. I think he saw himself as more of a politician than as a police officer. He wanted to make policy, not enforce the law.

When it came time for our follow-up event at the Docks that December, Space Invader, I was told by Andrew Stevens that the police weren't even offering paid-duty service to the Docks any more, just like what had happened at the Newz. *Here we go again.* I was doing my best to observe the guidelines, but they were non-binding, and if the police weren't going to take step 1 to follow them, I wasn't going to let them put me out of business because of it.

We'd put on the safest events we could, with a large security presence, EMS on site, paid Toronto Ambulance sitting outside, with a safe legal venue that was listed on the flyer and tickets, and the recommended age of 16+ publicly stated. I did my personal best to follow the jury guidelines, even if no one else would. The police would be the one problem.

On the night of Space Invader, an hour before we opened, two cops showed up. They wanted to talk to me. They berated me in the office about the fact that no pay-duties were hired.

"I was told by the venue that pay-duties weren't working this venue any more."

Thankfully, Andrew Stevens spoke up, "I was under that impression, based on other events here."

Then the cop said something laughable. "There are guidelines now that require you to have them." He was referring to the TDSC guidelines, the ones I had helped draft and the same ones his chief had publicly stated he didn't recognize.

I stayed quiet, not wanting to antagonize him, and took his abuse.

"If someone dies tonight I'm going to testify against you. You'll be living in a bachelor apartment."

In my mind I thought, "I live in a small one-bedroom, joke's on you."

Then they left. I was a little bit rattled, but boy, did these cops make it hard to work with them. I spoke to security, and in light of the cop's tirade, we agreed we needed to be on the ball tonight.

Fortunately, Space Invader was another flawless night. We didn't have any problems, and we made it through the night without incident. The Hullabaloo atmosphere was there, as it always was and would be.

However, the one thing of note was that my attendance had dropped. It was not a bona fide sellout—several hundred people less than that. I also noticed a large increase in the number of American ravers who were making the trip up. I wondered where my numbers would be without them.

Because of the cost savings from the lack of pay-duties, Space Invader didn't lose any money, but both it and Funtopia 3 only made a profit of about $1000 each. I had pushed ticket prices up $5, but I was wondering how I could make these events profitable again. Each show was three months of my life, planning and executing. The costs of everything had gone up—venues, security bills, and even talent.

Hulla was a far more efficient operation than most other promotions, and we had an extremely strong brand and extremely dedicated following. How were other promoters going to deal with this changing shift? I also wondered about the other promoters that didn't have the same draw power from the States. Was it just temporary? Could we return to growth again? All the big promoters were feeling the pinch now.

From: Panda Kid
To: Anabolic Frolic

Chris, you have made many people along with me very happy. Chapter 5 is beautiful. The music you put out is great, you have a way of making people feel joy and happiness that surpasses many things. Thank you for all the chapters and your unselfish desire to put on parties, that are the best in the world (no exaggeration, it's the truth). See you at Rhythm of Life

P.S. I'm the kid who gave you the bracelet that says A-Frolic, with blue butterflies.

(Posted to the Internet)

chapter 53

HAPPY HOUR

In August of 2000, I was approached by Don Berns about hosting a happy hardcore radio show on a streaming website he was involved in, called 1groove.com. At the time, streaming radio was a new frontier on the internet, as the technology was very early. Podcasting did not exist yet; the first-generation iPod would not even be released until October 2001. YouTube did not exist, and SoundCloud and any of the common technologies that are freely available today were many years away. This meant that all streaming had to be done by desktop computers on early internet technology.

1groove was backed by a larger entity called The Iceberg, which had a multimillion-dollar investment from tech investors. At that time, 1groove was the highest rated dance streaming station on the internet, and it also did an FM simulcast to Toronto from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m.

Besides Don, many of the recruited management at The Iceberg were well-known Toronto radio legends who had previously broken new ground on emerging radio in the heydays of the 1980s. There was excitement in the air that this could happen again, with the internet being the new vehicle.

Don pitched me a weekly three-hour window for a show, and I came up with the name "Happy Hour."

"That is an amazing name!" he responded.

I was given a time slot of Wednesdays from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. At first this was seen a bit as though they were treating us as second-rate. The most coveted spots were the FM simulcast spots, "real radio," but I accepted the time slot, even if I was a bit disappointed.

1groove had its own studio in an office building with the other Iceberg properties. It wasn't large, just enough for a couple of people, two turntables, two CD players, and a mixer. Any other guests would basically have to sit in the hallway until it was their time to be on the air.

Three hours seemed like a lot of time to fill by myself, so I recruited my friend Tommy, DJ Silver1, to be a cohost. We quickly devised a format of taking thirty-minute turns spinning records, and each week, we would have a guest DJ in the studio to fill the middle hour.

I was able to promote the show on my websites at the time, with banners that 1groove had created for me. We were able to have fun with the format that I was the big-name DJ and Silver1 was the sidekick, not unlike the dynamic of late-night talk shows, specifically like Conan O'Brien and Andy Richter's dynamic. Very self-deprecating.

After our first show aired, I told Don I wanted the show to be the #1 show on 1groove.

"It already *is* #1. One week in, and I'm already saying 'Keep up the good work?' That's a first!" Don responded.

After our first month, we were officially the most listened-to show on 1groove, by a large margin. We didn't need to be simulcast on old FM radio; we had found a large audience on the growing internet.

The chemistry between Tommy and myself created a fun show with a lot of character, far more than just spinning records and

filling the time with music. We began to create comedy bits, talking about things going on. We also started to read listener emails on the air each show. Once we started doing that, the mailbag exploded.

All 1groove emails came to the same email box, sorted by show name. It was clear that most shows received no emails, and ours was always full.

An outside rating service ranked 1groove as the #1 dance station on the internet at that time, and we were the #1 show on it. I am tremendously proud of that.

The Wednesday time slots ended up being a positive for us. With not needing the FM simulcast, the hours were better for Tommy and me personally. We could bring our A game each week and not feel tired doing it. Tommy had a day job, so I'm not even sure if he could have done a late-night show at all, which would have completely affected the show format we developed naturally.

Looking back, it shouldn't have surprised anyone that my show would dominate so much. I was dominating CD sales and rave tickets during that same time. But I was always underestimated and continued to be so.

We would host Happy Hour on 1groove for two years, until their tech start-up money had run dry. I didn't want to give up on it, so I went through the process of setting up my own dedicated streaming server and my own dedicated website for Happy Hour. It would continue to be a regular weekly show until the end of 2004, when we decided to wrap it up. In the end, we broadcast over 250 episodes, during a time way ahead of the curve of podcasts.

I consider Happy Hour one of my great accomplishments, along with Hullabaloo and my DJ career itself. I recently started reuploading those classic shows to the internet, so a new audience can enjoy them, this time as actual podcasts.

One of the most unexpected positive outcomes of Happy Hour was that the R&D work I did developing my own streaming service led to the development of a new business I cofounded in 2010. Literally, much of the original Happy Hour source code was used to launch StealthSeminar.com, which as of this writing has been used by over 25 million people and has generated over one billion dollars for its users. That is a true legacy for happy hardcore. This wouldn't have happened without it.

From: Keith
To: Anabolic Frolic

Awe man… I can't thank you enough for so so many epic nights out and for allowing us all to be a part of your family. Thank you for everything you did, making Toronto THE hardcore capital of the world.

Still, 20 years after my first party hardcore is my heartbeat. There's something magical that happens when you're raving to hardcore. You dance so hard until the point that your heartbeat becomes beat matched to the bass, and its then you become one with the music. You, Robin, all the ravers, together made the best times of my life.

Thanks so much Chris

Happy Hullabaloo

Plur

Just wish this new generation could have experienced the life changing vibe that came ONLY from a Hulla party.

Love and respect

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 54

RHYTHM OF LIFE

Our next event followed in February 2001. With nowhere else to go, we remained at our venue of the Docks. The days of changing venues for every event were over. Chalk that up to the golden age of the scene; this was a new time, when everything had to be legit and above board. I saw myself now as no different from any concert promoter, with the rules of promotion they had to follow.

Rhythm of Life was shaping up to be a great Hulla event, but at around 12:30 a.m., the unthinkable happened again. I was alerted that security and EMS were dealing with a knife wound. Right in the middle of the dance floor in our second arena during the trance set of DJ OS/2, some sort of fight broke out, and someone got stabbed.

This was so unlike any Hulla incident. Violence was never a problem, and in all of our previous events, there had never been a fight of any kind. It just didn't go with the Hulla atmosphere, and aggressive people just didn't come to our events.

I had a paid-duty ambulance on site that immediately took the victim to hospital. I asked our EMS staff what had happened and whether the guy would be OK.

"I'm not sure, but we did our best," she reported to me.

Police arrived, and the second room was immediately closed, and everyone was pushed into the main room.

More police arrived. I asked them what they would like me to do. Because there were over 2000 potential witnesses inside, they couldn't just shut the party down. We also didn't know the severity of the injury. However, they did close the door. No one who wasn't already inside would be admitted.

I cooperated with the police as they began their investigation. The party in the main room still continued, because we didn't really have any reason at that moment to close it down; nor did the police want that. They were going to have to take the information of all 2000+ attendees there that night as possible witnesses.

I hoped for the best. I had heard from EMS that the victim had suffered a bad wound to his arm. People get knifed all the time, I thought, and don't die guaranteed, and there was medical attention on this person almost immediately.

We were in a holding pattern, just trying to get through the night. Rumors raced through the crowd, but no one knew anything, and they certainly knew less than me. Rumors were that someone had been killed back there, but I knew that wasn't the case, that he was alive when taken away and was alive at that moment. I hoped for some positive news.

I began my set at 5 a.m. Despite the confusion of what had happened in the second room, our main room was still going off. Just as I wrapped up my set and was going to pose for a photo with the crowd behind me, Klubmasta Will approached me.

"The guy. He's dead."

With that information just given to me, I had to suck it up for a photo in front of the ravers and to introduce a raver who was proposing onstage to his girlfriend.

Police assembled about twelve officers at this point to collect details from every single patron on the way out. They had the

party run for about another hour before they finally asked for the music to be turned off and were ready for everyone to go home.

I went to the Docks main office to sit. Robin was there, and Will sat with me quietly.

"I don't know how we'd ever have another Hullabaloo," I told him solemnly. Even though I had not caused this, I was still caught in this vortex, and I didn't know how much of this I could take or wanted to take. My thoughts immediately went to all the ravers, who my work was so important to. What would happen to them? I didn't know. All of it weighed on me.

The head of security found me in the office and told me I'd better wait there, that the police would probably want to talk to me. So I sat there not saying much at all to anyone. Shortly after, I heard the music end, so I knew the plug had been pulled on the party. It was 7 a.m.

I sat in the chair in that office as I heard everyone leave the building. Finally things got quiet. I waited some more, knowing I'd have to deal with the police.

They never came. By the time I poked my head out of the office, the police, all the police, had left the building. Their investigation was over. They had left the building without even taking a statement from me. I wondered how the hell that was going to work.

We were done there. Robin and I went home. As stunned as I was myself, I was also worried for her, because she was only a month into a new medication that seemed to be really helping. I was afraid of this being a setback for her progress.

When we got home, I immediately took our website offline again, as had been my usual policy when this stuff happened.

The news the next day reported a stabbing death at a Toronto nightclub. It sounded like any other weekend. Two days later, the

news was over. The media dropped it as a story, while our community discussed it feverishly on various message boards.

This rattled me. The media had gone on a feeding frenzy that lasted several months because an adult took a drug of their own free will to chase a chemical high that killed him, but in another incident, someone's life was taken from them, and that was old news in two days? I just didn't understand.

I should have been relieved, of course. I avoided the media spotlight this time, but as a human being, this deeply affected me. Looking back, I was traumatized by the proximity to a murder. I was a collateral victim, just as any eyewitness to murder might be.

I was never mentioned once by name in the news. I waited for the police to call me, but they never did. I was never a witness to anything, so ultimately, I had no information. The police had dealt only with Docks security and management, so the only references were to a Docks nightclub stabbing.

I suppose it was all for the best, because this stabbing ultimately had nothing to do with the music being played or the weather outside. It was a fight between people who had a history, and it could have happened at anyone's event that was happening that night.

The case would drag on for years, with someone being wrongly held in prison for a year before the correct person was arrested. A jury would initially rule not guilty by reason of self-defence, but on appeal, eight years later there would be a conviction for second-degree murder.

I wondered if I'd be called as a witness at the trial to establish the event that was happening. No one ever called. I would read about it in the newspapers like anyone else. Murders happen every week or every day. This became old news. Even raves themselves had become old news.

Like before, it was time to pick up the pieces and move on.

From: B.J.
To: Anabolic Frolic

Chris,

I just wanted to thank you for letting me propose to my girlfriend at Hulla 18. It meant a lot to the both of us. I have been going to parties for a few years but that was my first Hullabaloo.

You have something very special. That was the most incredible vibe I have ever felt! It is really unfortunate and sad that someone's life was taken at the party. I admire all the people there for having the strength to keep the party going on. I hope this doesn't put a damper on future Hullas. I know you have been put up with a lot of obstacles that people have thrown at you. It is great that you have overcome them and continued to throw such extraordinary events.

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 55

GROUP HUG 2001

April would have been our next event, but once again, I didn't have it in me to proceed with business as usual. The weeks and months passed by. But once again, I was motivated by my fans not to just give up. What happened was horrible, but it really had nothing to do with me. I didn't cause it and no decision I made had contributed to it. Since it was a feud between people who knew each other, it could have happened anytime or anywhere. It was just my bad luck that it happened during my event.

Violence can happen at a nightclub, mall, restaurant, anywhere, and no one expects those businesses to close down permanently because of it. The Docks didn't close down. My fans didn't want me to. So I continued on, for them.

Time had run out to promote a big event. I called Athena at the Opera House to see if perhaps we could arrange something. She had a date available for me in April.

It seemed appropriate that in light of recent events, we should bring back the Group Hug name. I did, programming a low-key event featuring only Hulla resident talent at the Opera House. We put it on with about two weeks' promotion and, once again, no flyer, but we had a great turnout.

The Opera House was a smaller venue, with around a 1000-person capacity, but it looked great. It was an old vaudevillian theatre that had been renovated, with a balcony overlooking the dance floor. It made for a great rave venue, and the side benefit was that it condensed our previous multiroom events into a single room. One room, one vibe, one shared experience with everyone who attended.

It was emotional for me that night, as I got on the mic and thanked everyone for their continued support. I felt like a truly blessed man to have such supporting and adoring fans.

Yes, I had to make a living at this, but it truly wasn't about the money. This was bigger than me. I felt a deep connection to my fan base and wanted to stay strong, for them. I loved them as much as they loved me.

From: Sara
To: Anabolic Frolic

Hey Chris!

It's me again, Angelic Dreamer. It was nice seeing you at Hulla, I haven't partied in such a long time!

Anyhow, I'm not gonna beat around the bush…I just wanted to leave you a quick note to remind you that Happy Hardcore and Hullabaloo (and the entire rave scene) has changed my life for the better, and YOU were one of the guys (among a few other people) who started all of this. Ever since I got into the scene, even before i started partying, I felt a whole new level of happiness…(and remember, I've never done any kinda drugs, so this is all natural! *s*)…and I just wanted to say Thank You.

I'm guessing that these days (as well as the upcoming ones) may be kinda rough on you, after what happened. I just wanted you to remember that it's not all bad.

So once again, thank you for all the happiness you have helped me find, hopefully, the police, media, and government will know that this was not your fault. I'm sure everything will be fine.

Take Care,

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 56

SUMMER 2001

Not knowing what to do next as far as the large-format Hullabaloos were concerned, we followed up with a party in July that I referred to as a "Special Edition." It was held once again at the Opera House, and I called it The Anthems. Every Hulla resident DJ would be playing the tracks that were their biggest hits, including a two-hour "Best of Happy2bHardcore" set by me. The party was a success, and I was successfully adapting Hullas to a new smaller format. I didn't know it at the time, but we had thrown our final large-scale Hulla. The Opera House would not just be a temporary home but our final one.

Even though our attendance had dropped to 1,000 because of the limits of the venue, I noticed that we were getting less and less turnout from Toronto ravers, with more and more Americans making their way up to Toronto.

It was only a couple of years earlier that virtually all of our support came from the city of Toronto, and I would sell thousands of tickets at ticket outlets in the city itself. Other promoters were seeing the same problems. We didn't quite know how bad it was going to be, but the scene had definitely peaked.

Following The Anthems, another iDance rally was scheduled, and I booked an "Official Hullabaloo iDance Pre-Party" on the Friday night before iDance, as part of the weekend festivities.

Despite the success the previous year of iDance's rally and the subsequent vote to allow raves on city property, there was still a lot to fight for. The police were still taking an adversarial position against us instead of wanting to work with us. We also felt that the lack of venues that were comfortable renting to raves was hurting the scene. So a follow-up iDance was scheduled for the Labour Day weekend that summer.

It definitely had less of a protest feel and more the feel of just a large event. There was some hope that maybe iDance could morph into our version of the Love Parade or some of the big European festivals.

Because of the huge turnout the year before, corporate sponsors came on this time, including Xbox, which was launching their game console that fall. The *Toronto Star* even became a sponsor. This was shaping up like a festival.

A CD featuring the music of local Toronto DJs was produced to sell, including a track of mine that I had made for Happy-2bHardcore Chapter 5, called "Feels So Right." T-shirts were produced and sold.

I was privileged enough to be asked to play again for the second time, the only returning DJ from the first year's rally. I was also the cover boy for that week's *Eye Magazine*, a weekly entertainment magazine for Toronto. I was featured on the cover, with an interview inside and a rundown of the event.

I'd play three times that weekend, also playing at the after-party that followed the daytime event.

City officials declared that 30,000 people came out this year. That total was significantly bigger than the first year, but it definitely felt more homogenized. The political bite was gone, but perhaps that was OK. iDance as a festival was fine by me.

But 2001 would be the last iDance held. Klubmasta Will, one of the main organizers, would take weeks of holiday time from his

job to coordinate it. It was quite the sacrifice for something that generated no money. There was also a feeling in 2002 that perhaps they couldn't outdo the 30,000 people of the previous year and maybe it would be best not to let it be seen as a potential failure. Something was missing. So just like that, iDance was over.

From: cargoweasel
To: All

This is gonna be a long post so bear with me.

I am a 31 year old former raver. I went to quite a few parties in and around the Toronto area from 94-97. I had been emailing with a local DJ who, like me, liked Happy Hardcore music a lot but didn't hear it at events as much as he wanted. He was planning a party, one with an 'old school' vibe, and a goofy name. I offered to design a flyer for him and he took me up on it.

The DJ was Anabolic and the party of course was Hullabaloo 1. Two weeks before I left Toronto to move to Los Angeles, I went to that party and had the single best rave experience of my life. 100% sober, I danced for hours nonstop. The vibe was phenomenal, like no other party for me before or since.

Years went by, and I drifted out of the party scene. Went to some desert raves in California, but the last one of those for me was in April 2000.

But tonight the magic was back.

I danced my ass off in a way I haven't since.. oh, the last time I went to a Hulla.

The people were mostly new, but the same as Hulla 1. Friendly, cool. Accepting. Instant family. Like no other party I've ever gone to. Words like unity and respect aren't just empty catchphrases, but a real philosophy that you all work towards and create every time. It's really not like other parties.

A few nights ago I played one of the H2bHC CDs for my boyfriend, Peter, the classical pianist, the English PhD, and he wanted to come to the party. He's never been to an event like this before. He had a BLAST. I think he had more fun than I did. He was the big guy with the beard and the orange shirt that looked like he was rolling his ass off (he wasn't).

Our only drugs were a double espresso beforehand. We drank only bottled water. I'm still buzzing. I could never do drugs at a Hulla party, it's just totally unnecessary. I want my Hulla experience unadulterated by chemicals.

This was going to be a last fling with this stuff. Screw that, I had way too much fun. I'll be back.

BIG BIG BIG BIG Thanks and hugs to Anabolic, and all the Hulla people for making us feel welcome. Rock on.

(Posted to the HullaBoard)

chapter 57

NEW REALITIES OF THE RAVE SCENE

By 2001, instead of seeing growth, the scene was in decline. It just wasn't attracting the new blood it needed to survive and thrive. The exponential growth we had experienced was long behind us.

I often speculated that the average raver lifespan was two years. If you were to take a photo of a rave crowd and then do so again two years later, you would see next to none of the same faces. Here's how I observed a typical raver's lifespan went:

Day 1—Raver gets introduced to the scene, usually by attending a rave for the first time with their friends. They instantly become in love with everything, like all electronic music equally, and can have a great time at any event. They go out every weekend to whatever is on the calendar that week.

Three Months in—The raver is starting to develop specific tastes. They no longer like all electronic music equally. Maybe they like happy hardcore more than jungle, so they seek out the events that appeal to them more.

Six months in—A little bit more picky about what events they're attending.

One year in—Attend only the events with the most appealing music and DJ lineups.

Two years in—They barely attend raves any longer. They are usually burnt out from the hours and sometimes drugs that they were using. Possibly they take the leap to DJ or promoter and stay involved, but if not, they're pretty much out.

Even when we were throwing our biggest and best reviewed events in 1999, we were already losing a lot of the original Hulla crowd that had helped make us successful. There's nothing wrong with that; it's just the way it goes. Luckily, we had far more new people coming into the scene than were leaving.

But by 2001, that was not the case anymore.

The rave scene seemed to be having a collective burnout. Raves were no longer as secret and illicit as they once were. They just didn't have the same appeal. Sure, new people were coming in, but raves had loss that critical mass that sent them to such heights only a few years earlier.

There was also a new phenomenon that I observed starting around 2000—the "krusty raver" syndrome, as I called it.

In the golden era of raves before there were message boards, when ravers grew tired of the scene, they just dropped out and went away, never to be heard from again.

But as the technology on the internet allowed ravers to still participate on the message boards, I found that some of the older ravers who had lost their shine were still hanging around the boards, often attacking the newbies who were still in love with the peace, love, and unity aspect of the scene.

As most of us old schoolers learned the hard way as the 1990s came to a close, we weren't going to change the world. The atmosphere seen at a rave like Hullabaloo, while amazing while you were a part of it, was not the reality of the world just outside it.

I personally never had a problem with that. Why not let us have a slice of fantasy for the night? Why hate it because the rest of the world doesn't live like that?

Some krusty ravers began to hate it, but worse, they would stick around and tell you so.

I found this element to be a drag on the whole scene. It got to the point where I made drastic changes to my own HullaBoard, coming down with an iron fist, banning many of these people. They no longer attended my events and felt compelled to take us with them down their grumpy, shitty holes. I wouldn't stand for it.

This was happening all over. Attendance was dropping across the board, and one by one, almost all the big promoters started losing their shirts and were never heard from again.

I didn't want to become one of them, but I had a solution: Why don't we give up on the idea of trying to recreate our former glory days?

I adapted the Hulla format to fit permanently at our new home, the Opera House. Single room, 1,000 people. One room, one vibe. And it would start a renaissance of sorts for Hullabaloo, allowing us to reach several more "generations" of ravers.

There was a lot for me to like about the Opera House as a venue. For one, the owners were not crooked mafia types. I felt they had a genuine interest in watching my back. After all the years of stress and abuse, this really meant something to me. For the first time, I could spend much of the night in my own event. For most of the first years of Hulla, I was positioned by the front door, keeping an eye on everything, only going inside for my set. If it wasn't for the live tapes and video that were shot, I'd have seen very little of my own parties for much of those early years.

I also had a philosophical change of view about the value of changing the venue for every show. Ultimately, a venue is four

walls and a roof. What makes the rave are the people who attend, the music, fashion, culture, community, and vibe. What we lost by not having a new venue each time for ravers to explore was made up in spades by being able to continue with our events at all. I'm certain that if I hadn't had the Opera House, I would have gone out of business, and we would have missed out on our greatest chapter.

From: Brandon
To: All

Hulla will forever be a snapshot of the extremes (positive and negative, but in the end positive overall) of the rave scene in Toronto, representing triumph over adversity in the long haul, and a classy exit—going out on its own terms instead of dissolving in the usual rave fashion of cancelled parties, message board bickering over promised-but-never-delivered ticket refunds, and promoter secrecy.

I think my wife and I had some of our best dancefloor moments together at Hulla events.

Also, fun fun fun!

(Posted on the HullaBoard)

chapter 58

ANABOLIC FROLIC GETS HIGH

Creating these great rave experiences for countless thousands of people, I began to get jealous looking out at the dance floor. I'd gaze out and see a dance floor packed with people having the time of their lives. Hullabaloo was started because no one had been throwing the parties I wanted to attend myself. Now here we were, years into it, and I wasn't able to participate in it.

Now, of course, being a DJ and being responsible for all this happiness and euphoria and being able to watch it all is an awesome thing, but I longed to have that quintessential rave experience.

I was afraid of drugs for much of my early years; the examples of drug users I saw around me didn't make me want to try them. I was thankful for that decision later, as we went through the inquest, as I was able to speak positively of the rave scene. I could say firsthand that drugs were not a necessary ingredient.

But all of that was past us now, and I was also 26 years old. I wanted at least one time to know what it was like to be in the middle of all that euphoria. I'd often ask DJs who were over playing for me what their opinions were. One was pretty blunt about

it. "You should do it. It will make you a better DJ, knowing what they're experiencing on the other end."

My mind was made up. I was definitely going to try it. But where?

There were a couple of big problems I faced. First, Hullabaloo was the only kind of rave that played the kind of music I loved. There was no point for me of even thinking of attending another rave.

The other problem was that I was too well-known. Especially at any rave, I'm surrounded by fans wanting autographs and photos, hearing "Hey, it's Anabolic Frolic!" I wanted to be an anonymous raver again.

I came up with a solution.

While the rave scene peaked in North America in the late 1990s and saw a decline starting around 2000, ironically, the place that I drew my inspiration from, the UK, was going through a low at the exact same time.

Hardcore was on a decline in England, even though it would be producing some of its greatest songs during that period. The great rave promotions I modeled Hullabaloo on, Dreamscape and Helter Skelter, would be out of business by 2000. The audience was shrinking, and DJs and artists were moving on to other styles of music, because they couldn't make a living any more in hardcore. Things definitely hit a low by the millennium.

MC Storm advised me that Slammin' Vinyl was mounting a large comeback for hardcore for that November 2001. Not only was hardcore going to be focused on in a big way, but it was going to be returning to a legendary rave venue, The Sanctuary in Milton Keynes. He suggested that if I was interested in going to any party in the UK, that would be the one. And so I would.

I called my contacts at Slammin' and arranged for guest tickets and also hotel reservations for a place in the area. They asked if I

was interested in playing, but this was not to be a DJ goal; this was purely to be a raver again. I didn't want to bring records. I didn't want to hang out onstage. I wanted to be in the middle of the dance floor. Just another raver in the crowd.

Robin had been doing well on the new medication she'd started in January 2001 and didn't want to risk her progress, so she decided to stay home with our pug while I went to England. I needed someone to go with me, and I asked Tommy (DJ Silver1), who had become a good friend in the past year and who was also co-hosting the Happy Hour radio show with me at the time. He was in without hesitation.

We bought plane tickets to London for the Friday of that weekend and would take the train to Milton Keynes. On Saturday, we'd attend Slammin' Vinyl and on Sunday by noon, be on the train back to London for our flight out that Sunday night. It would be an intense rave weekend, not unlike similar trips ravers would take to Hulla.

That weekend in November arrived in no time, and we landed in England. I told Immigration that I was attending a concert, and nothing more was said.

We arrived at the Sanctuary on Saturday night to see a huge line of thousands of people. The Sanctuary and the adjoining Roller's Warehouse would hold several thousand people. It made my heart swell to see such a large rave turnout for a hardcore event.

We jumped in the VIP line and got in without incident. Security had a large presence outside, with bright yellow jackets on. Once we were inside, I don't think I ever saw security again.

Two minutes into a venue a guy approached me. He asked if we needed some pills. As a matter of fact, we did. The plans for the weekend hadn't included how we were going to acquire any ecstasy. He put us in touch with someone he knew. His girlfriend

asked us how many we needed. We guessed four for the night for both of us, two each.

I then pulled out my money, as she started to look around. *Oh, right. This is an illegal drug deal I'm involved in!* I had forgotten. I looked around as well, didn't see any yellow jackets, and we discreetly exchanged merchandise. We were in business.

Tommy and I went and bought a bottle of water and took our first pills. *OK, it's on now*.

We headed upstairs to the old school room, where a favorite of ours, DJ Vibes, would be playing some classics. We found our spots on the dance floor and started to bounce to the beats.

Every minute or so, I would evaluate how I was feeling. *Still feel pretty normal*. Would I notice? *I'm having a pretty good time, and the music is great, and I'm surrounded by other lovers of happy hardcore.* This was a great time regardless.

A girl was standing next to me and kept looking at me. She was short with dark hair. I suppose we looked a little out of place with our baggy jeans, versus the UK raver styles, but this girl kept looking at me. I finally said "Hi!"

"Are you Anabolic Frolic?"

I couldn't believe this, I just got ID'd at a rave in England.

"Yes I am."

"Hi, I'm Sara, I listen to Happy Hour, so I knew you guys were coming tonight."

Tommy and I had been talking about our big trip overseas for weeks on the show. I had no idea listeners overseas would be on the lookout for us.

I gave her a quick hug and then got back into the action of the dance floor.

After about twenty minutes, Tommy turned to me and said, "Ohhhh yeeaahhhh."

What? He was feeling something. What the hell. I was envious. I wanted to say, "Ohhh yeaahhhhh!"

I kept dancing, while Vibes dropped a lot of great classic happy hardcore tracks. The energy in the room was awesome, with a cheer after every mix.

And then I noticed that I was hearing the music with new clarity. Suddenly, I could interpret all the layers of the songs, flowing together. It was sounding pretty sweet, sweeter than I had ever heard it before. The E was kicking in.

I turned to Tommy and gave him an acknowledging, "Ooooohhh Yeahhhhh!"

We hugged immediately. There was definitely a kinship felt, more than just our friendship; we knew we were having a shared experience together. This was feeling pretty awesome.

The music seemed to get more intense with each mix. The crowd energy was rising by the minute. I had my whistle and would blow along to the music. Tommy had a horn that he bought on the way in. Horns and Whistle Crew were ready.

I was thinking about how this trip was so worth it already, when Tommy turned to me. He was obviously thinking the same thing. He mimicked the classic MasterCard ad campaign: "Plane ticket to England, $600; train to Milton Keynes, $100; Ecstasy pill, $20; partying with Anabolic Frolic at Slammin' Vinyl, priceless."

We embraced again. This was too awesome. I was having the time of my life.

DJ Vibes finished his set, and I went to say hello. He wasn't expecting me but instantly recognized me. "Hey, you should have told me you were coming, you could have stayed at my place."

But I wasn't here to visit, I was here to rave it up. We decided to take a break and get some fresh air outside.

We hung around standing outside, and I could feel the E intensify and come on stronger and stronger. It seemed only the cool

air outside was keeping it in check at the moment. I was definitely starting to feel very high.

But suddenly, my stomach seemed to revolt. I was going to puke. I ran to a garbage can and threw up most of the water I had drank that night.

Sara was with us, tagging along, I felt obligated to tell her something.

"I don't normally take E, so I'd appreciate it if you don't mention anything about this online or anything." I was still paranoid about my image back home.

DJ Hixxy was scheduled to start in the main arena, so Tommy and I headed back in and grabbed some real estate on the dance floor.

As soon as I entered the warm humid air of the arena, the E took hold of me something fierce. At that moment, I wanted to go take a seat somewhere along the wall, but part of me told me that if I did that, I wouldn't be getting back up again any time soon, and I didn't want to miss out on why I had come—to dance to hardcore.

It seemed as though for that next hour, it was a battle to stay on my feet. The sound and lights were intense, piercing into my body. I probably had my eyes squinted to barely open slits.

We were in the back of the dance floor, more observing than in the thick of things. I glanced over to Tommy, and he was just shuffling on his feet too. We were in a world of ecstasy. I could feel the warmth all over my body.

I almost wasn't hearing the music anymore, but it was penetrating my body. It was almost like a dream. The soaring female vocals were shooting straight into my soul. I had never heard anything so beautiful before. I was high as a kite. I guess this is what would be called "rolling" or "peaking" when on E.

DJ Hixxy's set was over. An hour had passed in an instant. I don't think my feet hardly moved at all other than a slight shuffle.

The next DJ came on, and he picked up the pace with some harder and faster beats. It was a little too intense for how I was feeling at that moment, so we decided to take a break outside again.

There was a chill-out tent set up outside, with some South Park videos playing. We grabbed a seat and rested. I was not only happy to be here but happy to be sharing this with my good friend Tommy. I could feel walls that I didn't know existed come down, and I was totally comfortable in saying, "I love you, man."

"I love you too," Tommy responded, and we gave each other a big hug.

This seemed real. Finally being able to be honest with each other and say the things we as men would normally feel uncomfortable saying. It wasn't like some drunken, slurred "I love you;" it was the real deal. We could be open and honest about our feelings.

We spoke a bit more about our lives, and it was then I realized how much I loved Robin. Enough to see a couple's counselor with her, as she had been asking me to do. We had our troubles, and I had some "caretaker's burnout," but I knew now if we were to go the distance, it was something I couldn't resist any longer.

After about an hour, I was feeling kind of normal again, and then I noticed my stomach was growling. As intense as it was, I think the E was already leaving my system. Minutes later, I felt completely normal. There were only a few hours left in the party. We had to decide what we wanted to do with that second pill. "When in Rome," I thought, and we popped our second and last pills.

After resting for another twenty minutes, we headed back inside for the set we wanted to see most, DJ Sy and MC Storm. We took our place front and centre in front of the stage. I was feeling the energy again; the intense dreamlike state was gone. I'm certain my body wouldn't have been able to dance this much without some sort of help, never mind the jet lag we were experiencing.

With a five-hour difference, this would be the equivalent of 9 a.m. back home.

I felt united with the dance floor. I was screaming and blowing my whistle, looking at those around me in agreement. I then noticed something interesting; virtually everyone around me was high as a kite too. Their dilated pupils were a dead giveaway. I'd high-five them in acknowledgement. It was like we were united in music and in our drugs.

Tommy then told me, "Look at the lights." I was stopped dead in my tracks. The intense intelligent lighting seemed to be moving at warp speed. I swear I had never seen lights like these before. I think my jaw was hanging open.

Sy was playing all kind of hits that would rock any Hulla dance floor, and we were in heaven. I threw my hands in the air every time we were called upon. And MC Storm gave shout-outs to Anabolic and Silver1 in the crowd. Later I'd get the tape packs from that event and smile every time I heard that.

I couldn't help but sing along to every song that I knew. Sy then played my favorite hardcore song of all time, "Elysium," and I was just in a world of music and euphoria. And before I knew it, his set was over.

There was one DJ left, but Tommy and I could already feel our energy dropping. With the help of E or not, our bodies were thrown way off with the time difference. It was time to go.

The flight home was subdued, but I couldn't help but smile when thinking of parts of that night.

I had popped my rave and ecstasy cherry and had a grand time. I'd never make a trip overseas again as a raver, but I felt I had gotten it out of my system.

It was also interesting to observe and participate in a UK rave first-hand. As much as Hullabaloo was inspired by them and they supplied our imported music, I felt that Hulla had morphed into

its own unique experience. A superior experience. I also wondered how much of that experience was the result of not being driven by my own drug experiences, since I had none. Hulla was built to be something enjoyed without drugs, since that was the only way I had known how to do it.

Besides Sara, I don't think Tommy or I spoke to one other person the whole night. The energy was very intense on the dance floor, and those Brits loved their hardcore—they definitely lived a much more hardcore life—but the welcoming atmosphere at Hullabaloo wasn't there.

It made me realize how special Hullabaloo really was. There truly wasn't another event like it anywhere in the world. It also seemed that drugs were an almost mandatory requirement in England. I didn't see a single sober person the entire night, and most were right off their heads. Much debate had been had over the percentages of ravers on drugs at our events, but I knew for certain that there was a reasonably large sober quotient.

I wonder now how much Hulla was affected because the promoter was not a drug user and didn't actually have that experience or motivation in what was created. I strongly believe to this day that Hulla was better than the rest because the person behind it created something without drugs. As much as drugs affected an individual's enjoyment of it, it didn't need drugs, because I didn't need drugs to enjoy it. I think we had a high proportion of straight-edge fans because of it.

Hullabaloo was a very special thing and worth fighting for. As the scene was collapsing on itself, I was determined to succeed when others failed.

From: Stacey
To: Anabolic Frolic

Hey Chris, I know you're busy, but I thought I'd send you a lil something. Just so you know, there's lots of people out there that love ya (myself included). So I just wanted to tell you some things.

My first party was Birthday Funtopia 2. I'll never EVER forget it. I tell people all the time, it changed my life. It's changed me, and made me a happier person. I've met people who are now very close friends because of Hulla. Every time I party, it's thanks to Hulla.

You're like a father figure to so many. You keep us safe, and you entertain us. You started something that some people only dream of. You're an inspiration to a lot of people. I'll always support Hullabaloo no matter what.

Hullabaloo was responsible for my first party, and it will probably be my last. Never stop doing what you're doing, Even if Hullabaloo retires, we all know you have something else up your sleeve. I can't wait till the next Hulla, I'll be there with bells on. it's a great idea to size it down, I know it'll be a tight party with a great vibe.:)

Much love & respect,

(Sent by E-mail)

part eight

SHOOT AGAIN

chapter 59

HULLABALOO EVOLVED

Having a venue like the Opera House to work out of really saved my butt. I had envisioned it as a temporary home as we dusted ourselves off and looked to make a return to the large format Hullabaloo parties of yesteryear, but the rave scene was changing quickly.

We had a couple of special events at the Opera House in 2001, but I quickly realized there was going to be no quick return to large-scale events.

By November of 2001, pretty much all the major stress was over. The fire code charges were history, the inquest was ancient news, and the stabbing blew over in days. That trial would take years to conclude, but because of the nature of the incident being between known assailants, and the fact that our event had had nothing to do with it, I was never involved in the trial. It, too, was ancient history.

So I began the work of adapting the Hulla format to the single-room arena that we had at the Opera House. We would focus mostly on the happy hardcore that we were known for, with a couple of other sets from Trance or Jungle DJs to break up the night a little bit and give the programming of the entire event some character rather than a nonstop assault of hardcore beats.

We had no problem reaching our attendance goals with the smaller venue, but I continued to notice that more and more of the crowd were coming from the U.S.

That was both flattering and also concerning. The fact that our reputation was spreading, that people from all over the U.S. were driving sometimes dozens of hours to get here, was great, but I wondered what had happened to the huge Toronto audience that had filled the biggest venues only a short while earlier.

For now, though, it was fine. We hit our attendance goals, and I was making money again, something I had stopped doing for some time with the bigger shows. Not a ton of money, but I was making a living and enjoying life. I was still living in a one-bedroom apartment with Robin, and we didn't own a car. I also wondered and hoped that maybe our scene here could experience a turnaround like it was doing in the UK.

There was one other huge positive about doing events at the Opera House. I trusted them. I was finally able to enjoy my own parties. I could hang out onstage all night if I wanted and know that the door was under control. After years of hardly seeing the inside of my own events, this was a great thing.

Robin was taking on a bigger role with Hulla as well. She would handle talent and the guest list at the front door, meaning that once the doors opened for the event, I had little to do except play my set. My part included everything from the conception of each event to coordinating the flyer design, booking talent, dealing with the sound and light requirements, and putting tickets on sale. Once that was done and it was time for Hulla, I was able just to hand it off. This was a great accomplishment.

Knowing what a good thing I had with the Opera House and giving up much hope for ever finding an acceptable large venue again that met my requirements of being safe, legal, and profit-

able, I booked the Opera House in advance for five events a year. We had our dates locked, and it was a great stress relief.

I did originally receive some complaints from ravers who wanted new and fresh venues, but I put my money where my mouth was. I offered a $1,000 finder's fee for anyone who could clue me in to a good space. No one did.

After a few events at the Opera House, it became clear that we weren't going anywhere, and the complaints stopped. It also began to give the Opera House a "returning home" vibe every time we were there. It was an asset to us, not a liability.

We also dialed back the operating hours of our raves to 6 a.m. It seemed that most medical problems appeared at the end, and that made sense. The later and longer the party went, the more drugs people might take. So as a harm reduction decision, the events would now run no longer than 6 a.m.

Just like I always had, I learned and adapted. I made changes to how I did things that would serve the ravers and Hulla. I had dropped some of the ridiculous situations and behaviours I had put myself into in the past. I stopped worrying so much about a few dissenting opinions of haters who I likely could never please anyways. I focused on what it was that I was creating. Gazing out at the dance floor during my sets was the feedback I needed, not what was being said online.

I refined, and refined again, the purity of what it was we were doing. What Hullabaloo was. The crowd was smaller, but it was more intensified. Switching from the spectacle of a three-ring circus to a one-room event where everyone shared in one experience made us better.

We had successful events there in November of 2001 and February of 2002, and we celebrated our fifth anniversary there in May of 2002.

I had found a successful formula to continue business, while almost every other rave promoter of our era had fallen.

From: jenn
To: Anabolic Frolic

Thank you, thank you thank you!!! I have never experienced such a great time at a party!!! Hulla was most definitely the most touching, moving and emotional thing I've experienced in a long ass time. Everyone I met or even the ones I just smiled at or shared a moment with, are all beautiful. The 9 hour drive was so well worth it, and the city of Toronto is amazing!!!

I can't stop thinking about the party and how good it feels to feel alive again. Every time I listen to your cds I get soo emotional and start crying and even as I write this, I get teary eyed. I never felt such a strong feeling of hope at a party.

hence, I just got in the door about 20 min. ago and am exhausted from being in a car forever so I'll hopefully hear from you all and if not, enjoy the memories and thank you from the bottom of my heart.

plur

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 60

ROBIN UPDATE

Life with Robin had been a challenge. Her depression would be a battle for several years. She would end up going to hospital emergency wards two more times for suicidal reasons, but never for the same duration. Usually she would get over how she was feeling a few hours later and would return home.

Over the years from 1998 to the start of 2001, Robin would try a dozen different types of antidepressants. Every time she realized a new one wasn't helping her, it made her depression worse. She would become hopeless, and that can be a dangerous thing.

Then finally, in January 2001, things began to change. She found a new therapist and began a new antidepressant that seemed to really do something. Life for us was kind of becoming normal again.

Since we had started dating almost five years earlier, we were faced with a decision. It was time either to think about getting married or to cut our losses and move on. I set a deadline of June 2002, almost a year later, to decide. I did love her—that was never the question—but did I have it in me to deal with her health and any future problems that might come up?

Robin was ready to get married, so this deadline was really for me to decide, which created an unplanned imbalance of power. Robin urged me to go to couple's counseling with her. I resisted

at first, but finally agreed, my mind having changed during my ecstasy trip. I had vowed to take the lessons I learned and keep them with me during my regular life.

Our hope was that the counselor would help us figure this out. He was a decent bloke and made it clear his goal was not to keep us together, but to help us come to whatever was the best choice.

One of the first things he did was make us see the absurdity of having an arbitrary date hanging over our heads for this decision, and the kind of pressure it put on us, especially Robin. He also helped Robin reframe the situation, that she had as much power as me, because she could leave any time she wanted. It felt like a large burden was taken off of Robin's shoulders, and she felt a lot better.

We saw the therapist every week. Then, when it didn't seem as urgent, cut it back to every couple of weeks. Then a month. Then it seemed like we didn't have anything more to talk about, so we concluded the sessions.

They were extremely valuable. I recommend counseling to any couples I know who are having hard times.

So as 2002 approached the halfway mark, things were looking up for us. Hulla was doing well with its new format, all my legal issues were behind me, and Robin and I were happy. Life seemed good.

From: Leland
To: Anabolic Frolic

Hi!

I just wanted to say that you are a great guy. I started listening to you about a year ago and to tell you the truth, when I first heard "Happy2bHardcore" I really didn't know what to think, but it made me Happy. Now I've bought all of your CD's and I can't get enough of it. It's weird I've been a singer in a hard rock band for the last 5 years and I never thought that I would get into techno but obviously you did something great. Everyone I let listen to it gets attached. So in closing I just wanted to say thanks for turning up the speed!!!!! :)

True fan

P.S. I saw you at Vinyl Frontier 2 and I ask, please come back around soon!

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 61

SUMMER 2002

Summer saw us return our Hulla stage to WEMF for the fifth year, and this would be the last. WEMF had always been a tumultuous experience. It was, flat out, a lot of work.

I booked the talent and put our stage together, and we were all good to go.

Knowing I would be proposing to Robin sometime soon, I knew the only place I could really do it would be on the Hullabaloo stage. We had shared too much of our lives with our fans. It was the only place. WEMF was the next event on the calendar, so I made my plans in secret to propose then.

My good friend Tommy, DJ Silver1, was also planning to propose to his long-time girlfriend Sandy, also at WEMF. We had the perfect covers. He would tell Sandy that I was proposing to Robin, and I would tell Robin that Tommy was proposing to Sandy. Both of them would think that neither of us would dare steal the other's thunder, so they wouldn't suspect that their own proposal would be coming then. It was a good plan.

My procrastination affected my decision to buy a ring. I didn't do it. It was perhaps a week before the event, and Tommy had asked about the ring, and I told him I'd just do it without one. Tommy was insistent he'd help me get one. Sometimes I have to be saved from myself.

He offered to pick me up, and we'd head together to the Jewelry Exchange in downtown Toronto, where a bunch of independent vendors sold jewelry. I found a candidate, an opal ring, Robin's favorite stone. It cost about $100. I didn't have the money for an expensive ring, but it didn't matter to Robin anyways. I know, years later, if I were to ask her, she'd never want another ring.

There was one thing I felt I needed to do. It's old-fashioned, but I called Robin's dad at his work and asked for his blessing. I don't think he would have thought less of me had I not, but it seemed the right thing to do, and I was glad I did. He gave his blessing without hesitation. He knew it hadn't been an easy go for us, that I had done more than my share of taking care of Robin already and that I'd continue to do so.

The Saturday night of WEMF 2002 arrived. I scheduled Tommy's set to be just before mine. Following his set, behind the Hulla stage, he got on one knee and proposed to Sandy. She accepted. It was a nice moment for all their friends to witness. Now it was my turn.

MC Storm was with us once again and emceed my set. The whole time, I could feel the engagement ring in my back pocket. Storm knew my plan. We'd get through the set, but before I played my last song, he'd have me onstage to take the microphone.

I got through the set, and it was a killer Anabolic Frolic set at WEMF once again. I had settled into playing midnight every Saturday at WEMF for all the years we were there, and it was always a high-water mark for the entire event.

Finally, it was time, and Storm called me to the front. I got on the mic and asked Robin to join me onstage. She was so unprepared—she was dressed as a rave dragon, wearing red horns and some wings she had made with sparkly wrapping paper. Robin joined me, and I addressed the crowd.

"This is Robin. A lot of people think we're married, but we're not."

The crowd started to suspect something was up, and the noise amplified.

"There's something I want to do here in front of the Hullabaloo family." I pulled the ring from my pocket and opened the case. The tent began to explode in noise, as they realized what was happening.

I knelt on one knee, held out the open ring box.

"Robin, will you marry me?"

"Of course!" she said as she threw herself forward to embrace and kiss me. The stage lit up with camera flashes.

We embraced and kissed more onstage, as the crowd continued to erupt.

I had my last song cued up, "Stay with Me," which is on Happy2bHardcore Chapter 5. I leaned over the turntables and hit play. The song played as Robin and I inhabited stillness in the middle of chaos, the crowd, the lights. The music played, the crowd danced, and Robin and I were still, embraced onstage, face to face.

I'm fortunate that this was captured on videotape and still exists online today on YouTube.

The place was going nuts. DJ Elixir described it as if the whole tent was going to go up in a ball of flames from all the love in the air.

BOOK BONUS:

See the actual proposal on video. Go to:
https://www.anabolic-frolic.com/bonus/

After we left the stage, we were overwhelmed by well-wishers wanting to congratulate us.

For pretty much as long as anyone has known me in the rave scene, Robin has been there. We're one of those couples that everyone got used to seeing together, and of course we would end up married. It was like a fairy tale.

We wrapped up my set and went for a walk together. After all these years, I would marry one of my very first fans and the only love of my life.

Robin and I would stay true to the rave scene for our wedding. We wouldn't get married at a rave, but it was certainly a Hulla family event. Klubmasta Will allowed us to use his loft to get married. We exchanged vows on the rooftop overlooking the Toronto skyline, then we had our reception in his loft. It was a small affair, 38 close friends and family. Kristine, who ran the Friendship Crew, helped with planning and decorations.

My longest friend, George, would be my best man. I thanked him for being the guy who held all the scenery up, while I was the one with the crazy dreams.

Our big surprise for our guests was that Robin and I had secretly taken foxtrot dance lessons for two months. We surprised everyone with a first dance to a jazzy Billie Holiday song.

We were married on October 12, 2002. I happened to be booked for a six-week tour of Australia starting that New Year's, so as a honeymoon, Robin came with me for that trip. It was definitely the trip of a lifetime.

From: Kristie
To: Anabolic Frolic

Dear Chris,

I'm a 19 yr old raver from Detroit… I can honestly say that your music is my drug, my soul, and what keeps me alive sometimes. From what I've been hearing for the past few months, you'll be here (in Detroit) July 29th, for the Biokidd party We Are Still Twisted…. I can't tell you how much I'm obsessing over it! The thought of seeing YOU, Mr. Anabolic Frolic in the flesh, at that party, runs through my head at least every hour! I LOVE your music!

I have all the Happy2BHardcore CD's (3 being my favorite)… you've inspired me to start spinning my own happy hardcore. A 19 yr. old female happy hardcore DJ from Detroit? Unheard of…. it's all thanks to you!

Seeing you July 29th will only be my second time hearing happy hardcore spun in Detroit… PLEASE make it!! :) You're in for quite a time…

Sincerely,

Your #1 fan in peace, love, unity, and respect..

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 62

HULLA CONTINUED

We would throw five more successful parties at the Opera House in 2003, with the only hiccup being the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak during that summer. With all the American fans coming up, it definitely affected our turnout.

The Canadian support seemed to be declining evermore. For each event, I would watch the ticket sales spread farther and farther to more and more American states. It was very flattering that so many people were making such large commitments to come, financially (hotels and travel expenses) and in energy and time.

It was only having a positive effect on the energy of the dance floor. These were most dedicated Hulla Ravers ever.

I still wondered if the rave scene would ever turn around.

I had another theory about why the scene wasn't attracting more people: the explosion of hip hop in the new millennium. During the 1990s, Euro-dance was very popular. It would be easy for fans of that music to take a next step to trance or happy hardcore music. But if teenagers were listening to 50 Cent or Eminem, how could they ever jump from that to Anabolic Frolic? I just wasn't sure what would happen anymore.

From: P*L*U*R baby
To: Anabolic Frolic

People couldn't believe that my 2 friends and I had driven 10 hours all the way from Cincinnati, Ohio just to go to Hullabaloo. I told them that Hullabaloo is the best party series that I have ever been to. So thank you for letting us in at the door!! We really appreciate it. I had a great time!! I danced harder than ever and I could actually feel the vibe that formed.

When I saw the smiles on everyone's faces when we all sang happy birthday, I wanted to cry. Hullabaloo isn't just a party for some. Me, well, it is an escape. It is an escape to a much better place where everyone is accepted and loved for who they are. It provides a place where kids can go and listen to great music, meet new people, and talk to their friends. Hullabaloo is what a "rave" is supposed to be like.

(Sent by E-mail)

chapter 63

WE'RE HAVING A BABY

After a year of marriage, Robin and I felt we were ready to bring a child into this world. At Christmas 2003, Robin was sick as a dog and finally went and got a pregnancy test. We were at the mall in the middle of shopping season. She couldn't wait and took the test in the public washroom at the mall. It was a positive.

The first person we told was a clerk at the store where Robin was buying a new business suit. We had to tell someone!

We surprised my mother that Christmas with the positive test wrapped in a bow.

I knew we'd have to share this information with our Hulla family. The next Hulla was scheduled for February 2004, which would work out well with the strategy of keeping a pregnancy on the down low for the first trimester, just in case there was a miscarriage, which happens to 25% of pregnancies.

As was becoming something of a tradition, I got on the microphone after my set and told the crowd that some of them might have been there when I proposed to Robin and that we had something new to say.

"We're having a baby!" At which the crowd went nuts once again.

It was such a unique position I was in, as a DJ and promoter, to have that kind of connection with his fan base to share all these things with. It only contributed to what was special about Hulla.

Gavin Frolic would be born on August 11, 2004.

From: hyperhypo167
To: All

Well I'm back in TX and I think I broke down my trip pretty well…

4900 miles put on car

4 days non-stop inside a Plymouth neon.

Probably 500 bucks in total expenses.

1 Sign stolen From a NY Thruway "River Rat Cheese"

6 close calls with the police (all traffic oriented)

1 party in NYC

1 Bum asking us to wash his back

1 sketchy walk on the length on Queen Street East around 4 am the morning before the party.

Last but not least the Best Party I have ever been to in my 7 years of being in the scene. I heard my favorite songs played and I got to shake the hand of my favorite DJ of all time who just happens to be a really nice guy. Anabolic Frolic. Words cannot express how much this party meant to me especially since I was debating on giving it up.

So who ever reads this far Thank you for helping put it together or just adding to the incredible energy that was just flowing all night. And I can't wait to do it again.

Peace, love, and a big thumbs up,

Brad (The Guy in the white with the blue tie)

(Posted to the HullaBoard)

chapter 64

2004

Amid all of that though, I saw approaching storm clouds. Our events weren't complete sellouts like they once were. More and more of our patrons were coming from great distances. I would count the amount of American states I was mailing tickets to, and usually over a dozen would be represented. As great as that support was, I knew it was not healthy to see the local scene deteriorate so much.

Just about every other promoter was struggling, or their events would be very modest in size just to scrape by. None of the old big promoters were left. I felt like the last of the dinosaurs.

My record label, Moonshine, went out of business as well. It was from a combination of the changing landscape, with raves and also with the wild-west nature of music piracy at that time, before iTunes changed how people bought music. Chapter 7, released February 2003, would be the last official release.

Moonshine had been in trouble for some time, not paying me or any of the artists on the album. Things seemed pretty desperate there when I had my last meeting with Jon Levy. He admitted that usually what happened with companies like his was they got bought out by a major label, but that had never happened, and now they were in trouble. They never took a phone call from me again, and they closed soon after.

Most of the independent record stores in Toronto also began to close down. And just as the coming together of all these types of businesses elevated our scene, their loss meant we saw it decline even faster.

It was 2004, five years past the peak of the scene. I wasn't sure what to do. I was still making a living, and the fans we had were amazing, but we hadn't seen growth in several years. *Do I let it fade away to nothing?* I continued to wrestle with that dilemma.

For our seventh anniversary party, I decided to play all the cards I had and brought back the Birthday Funtopia name after a four-year absence. It was still at our home at the Opera House, but I hoped perhaps we might see a bump in attendance.

This seemed to have no effect, but it was still a great party, with DJ Hixxy and MC Storm returning once again.

After Funtopia 7 and the September event, Drift on a Dream, I had come to my decision.

It was time for the Hullabaloo era to be over.

From: SpeedJat
To: All

While there are other parties that started this whole rave thing, and while there are still good parties that will occur, Hulla defines the whole scene. People that started raving in the mid 90's that do not do it any more, still remember Hulla. When I told one of my friends that a Hulla is just a party, she told me: "No, it's more than just that!". And it is.

It seems that in the past few years it has somewhat lost its luster, it's still something that has defined the Toronto rave scene and many people know about it. How many times have you heard anyone say that they came all the way from south US or UK to attend a rave? But you definitely heard that for a Hulla party.

So I congratulate the whole Hulla crew on making this thing a memorable event that many people will remember as a good part in their youth, and I will definitely plan on getting there for the last one.

(Posted to the HullaBoard)

part nine

WIZARD MODE

chapter 65

ALL GOOD THINGS MUST COME TO AN END

It meant a lot to me that after all we went through, all we fought for and against, every time I might have quit but didn't, that we were going to wrap things up on our own terms. Virtually every rave promoter before me had just gone out of business after they lost too much money. I knew Hulla deserved to be different and to stand alone.

I was inspired by how long-running TV shows will announce their final seasons and then build to a big series finale show. The TV show *Friends* was ending that same year, and it seemed to be getting constant attention because of that. I was also inspired by shows like Seinfeld, even going back to the pinnacle of series finales, that of *M*A*S*H*.

I prepared an announcement and posted it on our website.

It is a very bittersweet moment as I announce that this will be Hullabaloo's last season and we plan to cease event throwing on our 8th year anniversary, July 9, 2005. That will be our 44th event in total, a near unprecedented run that only a very small amount of production companies in the entire world have ever reached. I think everyone knew we couldn't go on forever and I wanted to end on the high note that Hulla so much deserves.

The legacy of Hullabaloo is one of the most formidable of the entire history of underground music. Since Hulla is unlike any other promotion and means so much to so many people we thought it deserved a going-out unlike anything before, so we're giving it a bit of time. That leaves us just four more times to come together and live the magic that has made Hulla what it is. We'll have three regularly scheduled shows, and then of course a final send-off that we're sure will be filled with such emotion the likes of which have never been seen.

I started Hullabaloo to promote the kind of music I loved and wanted to hear out myself. Unlike the regular path of a high profile DJ, I knew the scene would be better served this way more than anything else I could do. After all, this music was meant to be heard in one way—at a rave. Little did I know then how much that decision would resonate with generation after generation of partiers and such a phenomenon would be born. While Hulla would never have existed if Happy2bHardcore didn't come before it, the effect of Hullabaloo on the scene and the people who attended our events has been far more profound than even selling over 400,000 Happy2BHardcore CDs.

I've been working on a book about my journey and all the behind-the-scenes stuff that no one is privy to, and now that book will have an ending. I hope some of you who have never been take this opportunity to be part of this final chapter instead of just reading about it and for everyone who was part of the adventure along the way I'd like to thank you for your contribution to rave history.

With much love,
Chris Frolic

Hulla would have its "final season" leading up to its big finale. Four more events. I had hoped that the attendance for all four of them would benefit from this final season.

We had two more regular Hullas in December and February before I announced our plans for the final event.

I made the decision to announce the final Hulla and sell tickets for it before our second-last party was even announced. I knew the final Hulla would sell out easily, and I hoped that if tickets for it were completely sold out, it would in turn boost the second-last one.

Tommy suggested the name, All Good Things, which also happened to be the name of the series finale of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. It definitely fit our event.

I wanted to design a special flyer and came up with an idea based on the dance lessons Robin and I had taken for our wedding. Our dance ended with a move called the "big dip". So for the final Hulla flyer, Robin and I posed, giving a big final dip.

The final Hulla would be a residents-only event. It wouldn't be about any visiting DJ. It would be a celebration of everyone who had made Hulla what it was. So each of our residents and a couple of special local favorites filled out the lineup. The night would be anchored by a closing set from me—a two-hour "History of Hullabaloo" set. I normally would never play last, but for this night, there was only one choice about who should be on the decks when the lights came on.

The flyer text:

> *As the saying goes, all good things must come to an end and after a historic run the time was right to end with our head held high and leave the legacy no other promotion has or could leave. Now, on July 9, 2005 one of the greatest stories to ever rise from the rave scene will come to a close. We can mourn, we can reminisce, but one thing we can all do is look back and say "WE WERE THERE!".*

You remember what your first Hulla was like; the anticipation, the preparations, making costumes, creating jewelry, the meetups, the message board chatter. Something special was in the air, unlike anything else. For 8 glorious years Hulla was the one constant that carried the scene through its ups and downs. Hulla can't claim to be the first, or even the biggest, but for many people it definitely burned brightest. Hullabaloo held a special place in the hearts of those that attended as well as those who wished they could. The scene was never the same once Hullabaloo arrived, and you know it will never be the same now that it's gone. It's touched countless people in countless ways, and you know this night will be one marked in the history books. It seems fitting that the company that many felt symbolized the very essence of what the rave scene was really about gets to say it's goodbyes as it should, on its own terms.

One last countdown. One last hands in the air moment. One last sing-a-long anthem. One last time to dress up. One last time to see many familiar faces. One last time to form that world famous crowd. It's Hullabaloo, one last time.

We would remain within the safety of the Opera House, but I wanted to have a throwback to the type of lighting and sound we used to have at our greatest events. So I finally increased the ticket prices to help pay for the production that would rival our biggest events. We might never be able to "party like it's 1999" ever again, but I sure as hell was going to make it look like a 1999 event. It would feature lasers, scaffolding, and trussing to fill the entire stage and as many lights as would fit. Also a huge video projector for a special project I had in mind. No expense was spared. We were going to go out in style.

I also had an idea about some sort of commemorative keepsake I wanted to produce. It was really important that people never forget about Hulla, so I came up with an idea to produce a commemorative magazine that came with every ticket purchase.

I spent over two months creating the magazine. I had to comb through every picture we had. Many of them had to be scanned in, because digital photos didn't exist during our first years. Once these were collected and sorted, I began the process of assembling as many pictures as I could within 24 pages. Pictures from every Hulla would be featured, as well as flyers and parting words from myself, Robin, and all the DJs and MCs as well as the Friendship Crew.

It would feature over 750 pictures crammed together like a Tetris game. I painstakingly laid out each page on my own in Photoshop.

No one had ever made a commemorative book like that for any rave before, and none have since.

The cover featured a poignant photo of me DJing with the Hulla logo behind me. I utilized an automated mosaic software to then recreate that image with tiny photos from Hulla; over 4000 tiles would recreate that photo for the cover with a simple "1997–2005" titling the book.

Tickets went on sale and would sell out completely a full five months before the event itself. A completely unprecedented feat.

Following the ticket release for All Good Things, we announced our second-last event, Lost in Space, featuring our last UK DJ guest, Scott Brown. That event sold out completely as well. Hulla was definitely going to go out on a high note.

Leading up to the All Good Things finale, I had some other ideas that I wanted to see happen. I produced a slide show recounting our entire history over the six minutes of a song to be

played that night. I also had one other last idea for the video screen, inspired once again by *M*A*S*H*, for the very end.

There was a lot to celebrate that night, but in the back of my head, I couldn't relax completely. Part of me worried, What if something bad happened on our final night and totally fucked us? What if there was an OD? What if the police showed up? I was going to look forward to never having those thoughts again in my retirement.

The DJs worked through their final Hulla sets, finally getting to my scheduled start time around 3 a.m. The last DJs before me, Elixir and Subsonic Chronic, played their final songs and then went to silence. The venue darkened, and the video screen lit up.

8 years

44 events

It all comes down to a single moment…

Right now.

My video slide show then played, recounting each Hulla and photos of past and current rave generations. Video played of my proposal and baby announcement. The crowd erupted.

Finally the video ended with:

"It started in a basement," as footage from our first event played.

"And became a phenomenon," as a sweeping crowd show from the 5000 ravers at the International Centre was shown.

"It may be the end of an Era, But one thing we will remember…"

"Hulla4Ever," as the Hulla logo flashed on the screen.

The crowd went wild. It truly was the end of an era. History was happening before our eyes. Finally, the lights focused on the stage. I was standing alone at the decks. We all knew what this moment signified.

MC Jumper spoke: "If you have not realized it yet. You are a part of history."

"Years from now, when people talk about raves and people talk about hardcore in North America. One of the things that will come to their minds is Hullabaloo."

MC Flipside: "Jumper, I want to say something about this man right here on the turntables right now. A little philosophy. When you live your life, I want to wish you the very best in your futures, you gotta make decisions, and you gotta stick to your guns. Integrity is a word this man exemplifies every step of the way, because all the criticism that this man has taken because he believed in his hardcore music, and making sure people who are into that aspect of the scene, because there's all types of electronic music. The happy hardcore scene took a lot of bullshit from the press, and no matter what, he kept on pushing the music, he kept on pushing the sound, he kept on bringing you these parties. Now when I count to 3, I want to see every single one of you put your hands up and make some noise for the Hullabaloo crew! 1…2…3…"

Jumper: "Now for one final time, I get to introduce this DJ at the Opera House, so when I say his name, you've got to scream so loud, you'll feel it in your heart for the rest of your lives. Are you ready, for the DJ…Anabolic Frolic!!!"

The crowd erupted like nothing you've heard before.

MC Jumper: "We are Hullabaloo! Forever!"

And then it was time for me to play the set of my life. I started with a track everyone would know, the lead track of Chapter 3, "Distant Skies," which is a little bit melancholy—and then I went on a journey of songs that had made an impact at Hulla over all these years. I even dusted off the very first track I played at the very first Hulla.

Everyone would sing along with all the songs, and it was everything you would hope a set like that would be. We'd stop a few times during the set for a few different presentations. The

Friendship Crew had presented me with a mounted record signed by every hardcore DJ in England, and the surrounding mount was signed by all the Friendship Crew and Hulla DJs. There was a plaque engraved with Hullabaloo! June 1997 July 2005. It was a very thoughtful gift and hangs in my office today. I'm looking at it right now.

Robin presented each Friendship Crew member with a gift of their own, a group photo framed and signed by me and Robin.

The set worked into a frenzy as I built my way up to the biggest Hulla anthems ever, sending the party into the stratosphere when "Eye Opener" dropped. Then the final beats played out, my set was almost over, but I had a few words for everyone.

I hope you guys don't mind, I wrote some things down I'd like to share with you guys… {crowd cheers}

I can't believe we lasted this long. To be going out with such a bang in the year 2005 is just, amazing. I mean, you've heard the stories…I was just a dude, I was just a kid, I was just a guy who happened to love a certain kind of music and just wanted to share it with other people. Who knew where, I certainly had no idea where this was going to take me. And tonight is probably the proudest moment of my life, this is just amazing. The amount of love you guys are showing. It's just awesome. {crowd erupts} Thank you.

I've said this before, but my goal tonight was to leave a legacy unlike anything anyone has ever seen before. 10, 20, 30, 40 years from now…tonight will be talked about, forever. {crowd cheers}

Hullabaloo existed at a time in history that will never be repeated, and can never be repeated. A once in a lifetime

coming together of a lot of very special people. A cheer for everybody. You're all very special, you've all made it possible. {crowd cheers}

Alright, there's a lot of people I want to thank, 'cause this is my chance.

So, I want to thank all the Hullabaloo DJs, I think the best known group of residents in the whole world. We've had the best DJs here…Frisky, D-Minus, Silver1, Elixir, Subsonic Chronic, honorary Hulla resident DJ Spinz. Our MCs, Kwik, Gobstopper, Jumper, Everybodies Daddy, and MC Storm who would have loved to have been here today but obviously couldn't make it. We love you Storm, hopefully you'll hear the recordings. {crowd cheers, some chants of "we love you Frolic"}

Back after our 3rd Hulla party I realised that our local residents were as important to making the night a success as any of the headliners. And that's why on every Hulla flyer everyone's name is the exact same size. {crowd erupts}

So, there's a few people I want to mention, some of them you may know, some of them you may not know.

My oldest friend and best man at my wedding is here tonight, his name is George, go ahead and wave. He came up from Ottawa, just got here hours ago but he knew tonight was a really important night for me, so, thank you for coming, George.

I want to thank Cosimo and the Audio Dynamics guys. They've been doing sound and lights ever since the beginning.

Cosimo designed the lighting rig tonight, he ran it all night. He's up there. Cosimo, awesome awesome work man, you can be proud. Also, Scott, the sound guy, and the Opera House guy, I've forgotten your name, sorry. Haha.

I want to thank my uncle Yuri, Gavin's middle name namesake. He's just over here, go ahead and wave. Those stories you hear about me living in a small office for 2 years—well that was Yuri's old office that he let me move into and without his support in the old days, getting me through, I wouldn't have made it here tonight, so thank you Yuri. {crowd cheers}

Is Klubmasta Will here, I saw him earlier? I need to thank Klubmasta Will for giving me all kinds of support. Especially during our darker periods, he was always there for us, and again we wouldn't be here tonight without him. {crowd cheers}

There's also someone I need to point out, at the risk of embarrassing him. Robin's dad, Steve. He flew all the all the way in from California. He just got here today. I'm going to share a little story; back in the 60's Steve lived the hippie lifestyle. He hitchhiked back and forth across America for 2 years. He had his head cracked open at a protest, and it was with great interest that he'd hear my stories about what we were doing up here at Hullabaloo, and he knew he had to see it for himself before it was gone. {crowd cheers}

I've got to point out my wife Robin, I don't need to say much more about her. {crowd cheers} Give it up for Robin. I AM going to embarrass Robin a little bit though. She was my original groupie. {crowd erupts} She had a master plan about finding my hotel room while I was in Los Angeles and coming

to it and seducing me. But oddly enough we met in real life and fell in love before she could execute her plans. And it's been love ever since.

And of course I have to thank you, the unbelievable Hulla Ravers. {crowd cheers} Thank you. Whether tonight is your 1st or 41st Hullabaloo, it's going to hold a special place in all of our hearts. And that dedication our patrons have shown Hulla over the years has made it a success. By my count I figure over 100,000 people have come through our doors, and it's just… Past and present, everybody contributed to making Hullabaloo what it is. So, thank you past AND present Hulla Ravers. {crowd erupts}

Lastly, I need to leave a message for my son Gavin; Gavin, you're almost 1 year old and you have no idea what daddy does for a living. {crowd laughs} One day you'll look back on these pictures and videos, and maybe have a good laugh, who knows. I would have loved to have been able to continue this forever, as there are few professions that allow their father to spend the days, every day, with their son. And at least Hulla allowed me to spend this first year every day with you. You won't remember this time, but I will, forever. {crowd erupts}

And now, this is it. I mean, as excited as we were for tonight, and with as much anticipation as we had, this is it, it's time for the last song. {crowd shouts "nooo" and "we love you"}. Everybody, let's come together and share this. One last one. {crowd erupts}.

It was time to play the last track. I had "Shooting Star" cued up. I then pressed the start button. Instead of standing behind the decks, I chose to stand in front of them. I closed my eyes and

just took in the moment. I let it soak in, I let the energy from the crowd in front of me radiate towards me. This was it, the final Hulla song and the final Hullabaloo. This was it.

Everything we worked for and fought for all these years was coming down to this one moment. We could easily have been another rave promoter casualty taken down with the scene or given up along the way. But the Hulla story will be remembered as a positive one, and we had finally come to this closing moment. My eyes closed, my head held high.

All I could do was tilt my head back, put my hands behind my head and close my eyes. This was the culmination of my life's work.

The final beats of "Shooting Star" played, and then it ended. The crowd erupted in appreciation. I blew a kiss to the crowd and then immediately left the stage.

The word "Goodbye" appeared on the video screen above. This was it. The emotion was a full-on 10/10 in the venue. The crowd cheered and chanted.

I did have one trick left up my sleeve. I had planned to have an encore, like any rock concert. It was an unprecedented move in the rave scene, to actually leave the stage like that. The first chant gave way to cheers, then the crowd started to chant a second time, "One more track, one more track." I had decided beforehand that I would wait for two chants, and now I had it.

BOOK BONUS:

See the encore on video. Go to:
https://www.anabolic-frolic.com/bonus/

I popped back upstairs and cued up "Heart of Gold. It was the original Hullabaloo anthem. "Heart of Gold" was written in 1996 by Force and Styles, and it is arguably the pinnacle of the big vocal happy hardcore sound. The vocals were original, written by them and sung by a young 17-year-old singer named Jenna.

"Heart of Gold" had been a big part of Hullabaloo since the first party. It was also included on the Happy2bHardcore Chapter 1 mix.

"Heart of Gold" would be the final song ever played at Hulla.

As the piano chords closed it out, I hung around onstage this time. Slapping hands with my fans in the audience, all of them wanting to touch me before it was all over. Many people were crying, including some of the Friendship Crew. I hugged one of them, Jeanine, to console her, but I couldn't stop my big smile.

"Why are you happy?" she asked, confused, with her face full of tears.

I know now I was elated because I had made it across the finish line. After everything, we got to the end, we rode this to its natural conclusion. I wasn't forced to quit. I never gave up. Relieved that my biggest fears hadn't come to fruition on this final important night. *We made it. Touchdown. Hulla leaves the scene gracefully, just as it deserves.*

Not only did I get to my end but to the end that I created. I was the architect of this entire moment. This experience. Everything about it started as a thought in my mind, and now we were living it. Including the emotion. That was part of the vision. I knew it would be emotional. I facilitated it.

I spent the next month in the studio, mixing and mastering our live recordings. It was a huge undertaking to perfect eight hours of live music, but I wanted this night to be remembered forever.

I'm very proud of these recordings. Such a historic night, the emotion, captured forever.

Hulla was over, but it would never be forgotten.

From: Robin Frolic
To: All

I wish I could magically make you all feel what I felt when I stood onstage while Shooting Star was playing. I looked out over a packed crowd, hands in the air and candy-braceleted wrists everywhere, watched you all cheering and crying and whistling and living in that moment, and I knew that this was the last time I would ever stand onstage and see that. I waved our photographer over and asked him to stand next to me and take a picture. He said, "I'll go behind the DJ booth and get you and Chris in it too," and I said, "No, right here. I want it to be exactly what I'm looking at right now." He took the photo, stood there for a few seconds, and then said reverentially, "Wow." And I knew he understood why I wanted that photo, why I would always want to remember that moment standing there, feeling a sense of loss so great I thought my heart would break, but also feeling gratitude and awe and love just as intensely.

That, for me, will always be the defining moment of All Good Things. Standing onstage, looking at all of you, feeling the pain and joy and awe of that moment. It was one of the most profound moments of my entire life, and I can't even imagine how much more poignant it must have been for Chris. Although I have had the privilege of sharing in the experience, in the end Hulla has always been and always will be Chris' baby.

I am so very grateful to have been a part of Hullabaloo, and I am grateful that I was there to experience that, and that many of the people I love were there

to share it with me. I am happy that we were able to have a final party like that, to give Hulla the amazing, awe-inspiring, incredible ending it deserved. I am glad for all the newbies who got to experience the magic of Hulla; even though it was only for a single time, I've no doubt they'll carry the memories of that one shining night with them forever. I am especially thankful that so many of you supported us over the years, through both the good years and the difficult years, and chose to be with us for the end.

I was there, and all of you were there, and we were there together, all of us together in that moment, and that is what I'll always remember.

(Posted to the HullaBoard)

chapter 66

ONE MORE GROUP HUG

I really enjoyed my retirement after Hulla. Gone were the regular nightmares of raves going wrong. They were not about any real event, but I would have regular nightmares of random things going wrong. When I woke up now, I could at least be relieved that I'd never have to go through it again.

As a DJ, I considered myself semi-retired. I was still available and would play the occasional show, but only the ones that were of interest to me and that would be of good enough quality that I knew they'd be worthwhile for my fans to make the effort to attend.

I began to pursue other business opportunities. In the end, I had a lifetime's worth of experiences from my rave career, but I'd never made any real money. Robin and I were still living in an apartment at the end, and we still didn't have a car.

I still sold CDs from my online store, and new fans would find me still.

I felt I had done everything I wanted to as a DJ and promoter, and I felt great about it.

I did feel, though, that I had one piece of unfinished business. There had been attempts over the years to produce a documentary about Hullabaloo. I had lots of footage shot at our events, but I still needed to put it all together. A year and a half had passed since our final event, and it did cross my mind that it would be great to get the documentary complete in time to mark our tenth anniversary.

As the documentary project came together, I began wondering how I would premiere it. It would be kind of cool to DJ at a party afterwards or something, I thought to myself. I kicked some ideas around and made some proposals to other promoters to maybe do something. During a chat with Athena from the Opera House, I learned that she had a date free in July.

"Chris, just have a reunion party here."

In about two seconds, it was a done deal. In two hours, I had designed our ten-year reunion event. Robin came home from being out all day to the shock that there was a Hullabaloo once again on the calendar.

One name leapt to my mind; it was the obvious choice: One More Group Hug.

Old habits die hard. My promoter's blood began to pump. Within a week, I had a flyer ready to release and announced our reunion event to the public. Tickets would go on sale two weeks later.

Our online store was completely overloaded, and tickets sold out in a mind-blowing two hours. The legend of Hullabaloo had only grown in the two years we were away.

I organized a full weekend of events. On the Friday was a preparty, featuring the premiere of our documentary, and on Saturday would be the reunion.

Unlike the bittersweet atmosphere of All Good Things, One More Group Hug was pure celebration. We were happy to be getting back together one more time.

Our good friend MC Storm, who had been unable to attend the last party, would come out this time and make it. I once again built the party around our legendary resident lineup. Some came out of retirement to play this one more time. It was a truly epic event.

I spared no expense once again in creating a classic rave experience. The costumes of the ravers were unbelievable.

The whole night whizzed by, and Robin, caught up in the euphoria of the moment following my set, decided she was ready to

try for a second baby (something I'd wanted for some time). She got on the mic to tell our crowd.

Immediately following my set, MC Storm put his arms around Robin and I and addressed the crowd, "You are the Hullabaloo family, and this is your mum and daddy!"

MC Storm: "Ten fucking years of hardcore, ten years of rushing, ten years of the best raves in the fucking world! And I've got to tell you, tonight, you have set the standard for me mate, I have never seen a dance floor so colourful, so vibrant and so alive!"

The night ended differently than any other Hulla. I had played earlier in the night at 1 a.m., and I had no desire to try to recreate my finale set from All Good Things, but I did have one idea to end this event.

On our website for the two weeks preceding the event, I had opened up voting for our last tracks of the night. The vote was secret.

After DJ D-Minus played his final song, I took the mic again and told the audience we were going to end the party differently.

"From now on, there are no DJs, no more MCs, just 1000 ravers together." Then I turned to the crowd and shared one last little bombshell.

"There's one thing I've never done in ten years of Hulla, and that's raved with you guys on the dance floor. So I'm coming down now."

The crowd exploded at this idea.

I then theatrically prayed to the Hulla gods and asked them to start the final songs. A sound technician offstage pressed play on a CD I had given him.

I then jumped into the crowd and danced with them through our final songs of the night.

I got to be a raver at Hullabaloo.

This part has been hard for me to capture in words. I feel like I had finally found what I had been seeking for the previous ten years. This moment was ten years in the making.

As I wrote this book, I often thought how people would ask themselves, Why did this person do this? This moment was why I did it. Right now. Creating this. I had been creating these moments for generations of young people.

This one was a little different, however. I had created a feedback loop. A feedback loop through time, space, and energy. I was both creator and recipient. I had created this moment, and now I was in the middle of the dance floor with everyone, not solely as facilitator. I was one with everyone. Not just the ones around me but everyone who had been part of Hullabaloo for the previous ten years, who had helped make this moment what it was. If I imagine a road, cutting across time and space, it ends, right at this moment. Like a laser cutting through the universe.

I wasn't just dancing at a rave or on any dance floor but in this thing that I had created and suffered for. The music playing was by my hands, recorded earlier that day, not by someone else. It wasn't just about the people there but about everyone who had participated in this for the past ten years, who were part of the journey to that moment.

I had opened voting for what songs the ravers wanted to end with. They chose the three most important songs to both my history and that of Hullabaloo. If the choice had been left to me I would have chosen the same ones. I premixed the three songs earlier in the day and recorded them to CD. I gave the CD to Cosimo to play from the sound tech position when the moment called for it.

It was ten years of experiences and history distilled into a single moment.

It was a connection with everyone who had been a part of this, everyone who had contributed to making this moment possible.

Because I had left the decks, the stage filled with dancers. I was in the middle of the dance floor surrounded by people, the stage filled by people, everyone facing me.

I was free in that moment to go with it and do something that had been elusive and out of reach to me the entire time. Something that had been extremely dangerous and had harmed me, until this moment.

Imagine if you had ever dreamt what it might be like to drive a car and take your hands off the wheel and close your eyes. Imagine how thrilling but terrifying and dangerous that might be. But also imagine you had found a place, a piece of desert, with nothing and no one for 100 miles in every direction. Not a tree, not a hole, not a person. Just open flat land. You could bring a car there, a convertible Corvette, with the top down. Now imagine you had this safe space and you could indulge in this wild idea of yours. You then closed your eyes, pressed your foot to the gas, felt the power of the engine move the car, the wind blow through your hair. This would normally be extremely dangerous, but you had found the one place in the world where you could do it, so you did.

You even raised your hands in the air, foot on the gas, eyes closed. The exhilaration of it is beyond comprehension.

I found a way to do this. Within this feedback loop of love and energy. Feedback loops by their nature amplify, as they feed back on themselves.

This feedback loop was my creation. Of the past ten years. This moment was my creation. Everyone was there for me and because of me. Robin was with me, in the passenger seat. She had her eyes closed in the car as well.

This was a unique moment in human history. The only way you got to this moment was to take the journey I had gone through and affect the lives I had affected.

Something cracked open in my head. I was higher than I had ever previously felt. No pill taken. Robin and I both felt it. We felt it for days afterwards. It took days to come down.

The lights came on, but nobody was leaving. The feedback loop amplified some more as the crowd honored me.

A sustained roar of screams and whistles. We were all just so happy to be there. No one wanted to go. The crowd began to shout "Frolic Frolic Frolic" in appreciation.

Someone started to hug me, and then more people joined, and before long, the entire dance floor came together in a huge group hug. I felt the power of hundreds of bodies pushing in on me. I realized I couldn't move. This might have been really scary and dangerous if it had gone on longer than it did, but it didn't. One more group hug, indeed.

A new chant started "Thank you Frolic," *clap clap clapclapclap*, "Thank you Frolic," *clap clap clapclapclap*. Everyone joined in. I didn't know what to do, being on the receiving end of this, so I closed my eyes and held my face. Beaming a smile. The feedback loop was overwhelming as it grew exponentially.

This was a perfected rave moment. I had summited the highest peak that exists.

The crowd didn't move for over ten minutes. Just sustained cheering and chants. I had had a lot of high points in my rave career, but this was a new #1.

Finally, it was time to close the feedback loop. I started to work my way back to the stage, to start saying our goodbyes. The ravers slowly made their way out. It was a glorious night.

BOOK BONUS:

See footage from One More Group Hug. Go to:
https://www.anabolic-frolic.com/bonus/

When it was over, Robin and I both came home buzzing as if we had done actual ecstasy, but this was all natural. To be on the receiving end of all the love and energy, right in the middle of the dance floor, it had done something to us.

We laid in bed, staring into each other's eyes. Her beautiful green eyes. We felt newly in love again. The same kind of intense love you feel at the beginning of a relationship, not ten years later.

The love we felt made trying for another baby a natural thought. We had gone out that night with no baby plans, and we came home in love, wanting to create a new life from this love.

Connor Frolic would be conceived within days of One More Group Hug. Connor was a bona fide Hulla Baby and one of the greatest legacies to come. A baby created from the love of everyone we felt on the dance floor at that moment.

Hulla changed a lot of lives forever, some for the better, some worse, but I like to think that most were for the better, in deep and profound ways. Entire courses of lives were changed, marriages, children were born.

I will always know that and be proud of it.

EPILOGUE

★

The Aftermath

My initial thought was that we couldn't let this go. We'd have to make Hulla an annual event. But I had so much reverence for this experience. I respected it too much to go back to the well.

I also felt creatively spent. I had no new thoughts or ideas. It had always been about doing something new, and I had nothing new left to offer. This was never about nostalgia, and I would never let it be. It was over.

Not only did I end Hullabaloo, but I retired from DJing completely. I want to create new things or help people do that. That is my pursuit now.

August 1, 2009, Toronto

As I finish writing this book, we are a good ten years from the highs of the peak of the rave scene and the wild ride that followed. It's far behind us now, and it's safe to say it will never return. At least, not the way we knew it. Future generations of young people will find new ways to come together through music, to create and celebrate. Just as they had done during many generations before us.

With the benefit of ten years' hindsight, it's safe to say that the authorities truly did overreact and didn't know what they were talking about. Society didn't come to an end because young

people were out dancing all night, and yes, some were using drugs. So what? Drugs are everywhere, and as we learned at the inquest about 18 Ontario ecstasy-related deaths, the minority, three, were at raves. Did the authorities overreact? Of course they did.

Toronto is in a continuous campaign to prove itself as a world-class city and a tourism destination, and here for a moment, we did have something that was world-class. Toronto's rave scene wasn't just one of the biggest anywhere, it was also the most inclusive. Every style of electronic music was represented, and even a company as niche as Hullabaloo thrived here. Ravers came from all over to participate in our events, and with some nourishment, perhaps things could have gone differently, and Toronto could have had a more European electronica scene that continued to grow, not get battered into the ground.

It was a wonderful period for all of us who were a part of it. Every year on the news, I hear of some high school graduates who died from drinking and driving. Perhaps they should ban underaged drinking? Oh, that's right. It's already illegal. Perhaps rather than trying to pretend it doesn't happen, you acknowledge it and apply a harm reduction approach that will save more lives.

As for us, the rave generation. We grew up and moved on with our lives. I'm going to keep this in perspective when my own children are growing up.

Some people did die, but one needs to keep those things in perspective too. People die all the time, for all sorts of reasons. The biggest-selling legal drug, alcohol, kills more than anything else and destroys and rips families apart. There was an important cultural movement afoot, and some wanted to snuff it out because of a choice some people made that went poorly.

And that's what this is ultimately about. Choices. A choice to stay up all night listening to music your parents don't like. A choice to consume a drug that makes you feel good that happens

to be illegal and might also be dangerous. Whenever you make a choice to leave your house and drive somewhere, say to the beach for the weekend, not everyone is going to make it home from that trip. Road fatalities happen every weekend.

I hope I can keep a level head when I'm faced with the choices my children make. They'll have to learn from their own mistakes, and sometimes, it will be hard for me just to be a spectator while they do, but I'm going to trust that the odds are they'll make it out on the other end just fine, just like I did. I can't wrap them in a protective bubble, and I'm not going to try to do that to anyone else.

I will be honest with my kids, so they can be honest with me. They won't need to sneak out; they can tell me where they are going, and they can always call home if they need help.

And when they are 18, and adults, and most likely no longer living at home, it will be their time to spread their wings and live as adults, making their own choices. I can only hope that I will have done a good enough job to give them the tools they need to make it.

I have no idea what future generations will do to entertain themselves, but music and drugs have gone hand in hand for all of human history, so I know they will continue to do so.

A big part of why we did what we did is that we believed we'd change the world. I do believe there was a large connection between what we were doing and what had happened thirty years earlier during the hippie movement. I can remember watching the famous Woodstock 1969 documentary and watching interviews with the promoters and thinking that their words could easily have come out of my mouth. Words about what they were creating. At one point in the documentary, the gates for the festival had gotten pushed down, and Woodstock had become a free festival. The promoter was being asked what he thought of it turning free,

about the loss of his money, and his response was to turn around and say, "Just look at it." It was beyond the money for him, and I felt the same way.

With reflection today, I do see that we changed the world in our own way. It was changed for those who were a part of it. I receive emails regularly, all these years later, from people who feel compelled to write to me about how much their lives were affected. So I know this. We changed the world for everyone who was there, including how they interact with those around them. We take pieces of it with us, even if the whole world isn't a rave. I don't think that was ever the goal.

It's a fallacy to think that the world could ever be a utopia. Though there are problems in the world that we wish could be fixed, there are also people who make it better. I like to think that the ripples we made, the unity we promoted, the connections made, continued long after the music stopped.

I can only hope that my generation will remember the lessons we learned.

February 18, 2019

I wrote the first draft of this book ten years ago. I hit save and put it away, and ten years passed.

It has taken me twenty years to finally tell my story. I can see now how badly damaged I was from the trauma of these events. How something I cared so much for laid such a price on me, personally. I also see how much I was in service to the scene. I felt then it was bigger than me, and it was.

I was inspired to include the ravers' voices, and they now fill this book. They were why I did this. I am fortunate that I have all the original emails, HullaBoard, and guestbook entries going back over twenty years.

So what else do I have to say about this twenty years later? The term "beyond the Pale" originates from the Middle Ages, when England invaded Ireland and built a fence, the Pale, across the border of their territory. To go beyond it meant you risked your life in the wild and lawlessness. Nowadays it refers to being outside the bounds of acceptable behaviour.

I see now that in our pursuit of what it was we were chasing, we went beyond the Pale.

I wonder today what is possible without taking on these dangers? We were attracted to the newness of everything. My story had me creating a new path, making it up as I went. The answers also lie in something new, not in trying to recreate something we've already done.

My hope is that people reading this don't pine for a bygone era. That is not my intention. I'm sharing my story because I think it's important that it's told, but I wonder what can be learned from it, and how might a bridge be built to something new?

How can we create new experiences, new community, and new human development, but do so without the cheat of a drug or extreme risk?

That is where I like to focus my attention now. I am open to your ideas.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

★

Robin Frolic

Robin: "Since I know people will be wondering: my depression and anxiety were reduced to manageable levels after we found my wonder drug in January 2001. I was able to stop my psychiatric drug entirely in early 2016, and my health has stayed stable for years now. Mild depression will always be a part of my life that comes and goes, but I've learned how to manage it, and it isn't disabling anymore. While I still occasionally experience manageable anxiety, I haven't had frequent panic attacks in nearly two decades.

"These days, I've expanded the Frolic's 'brand' by adding Frolic's Haunt, a free event for the disabled community that I created and organize. Our goal is to be as fully accessible for as many different disabilities as possible, and this allows me to do press to educate folks that accessibility goes way beyond paths being wide enough for wheelchairs. (Inclusion and support for all disabilities!) I'm an apprentice taxidermist and a student in Health Sciences, with the end goal of being able to move into medical advocacy based around my chronic illness, Mast Cell Activation Syndrome.

"Chris is still the love of my life more than twenty years later, and we got remarried a couple years back, just for fun. We still spend most of our day together and are happy to do so. The kids are both doing great. Gavin is a high school student, camp counselor, staunch 2LGBTQ+ supporter, and computer whiz. Con-

nor's a cat-obsessed social justice activist that's been helping other kids from the time Connor was small. Both are caring, thoughtful, incredible people that we're so grateful to have in our family."

Klubmasta Will

In 2008 Will got married to Jane, who has never been to Hullabaloo. Will is still in law, lives in Toronto and welcomed 2 children. Will still finds time to attend the occasional electronic music event/festival.

Will: "I am very much the same person that I was 20 years ago, at least in terms of personality, desires and outlook on life. I credit Hullabaloo not only for some of the best times of my life, but also for opening my mind and introducing me to individuals that are still among my best friends."

Tommy (DJ Silver1)

Tommy married his Hulla sweetheart, Sandy, in 2003. They live in Toronto with their 2 children. Tommy still carries his childlike optimism for life seasoned with his life's experiences.

Tommy: "I carried the ideals of togetherness and inclusiveness that I learned from Hulla for the rest of my life."

Paul Burstein

He was a practicing criminal defense lawyer, adjunct professor at Queen's University Law School and the director of Osgoode Hall's criminal law intensive program. Paul was named as a judge in the Ontario Court of Justice in 2017, which is his current role.

Athena of The Opera House

Athena still operates the Opera House, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary the year this book was published. She has two grown daughters. In one word, Athena's answer for what Hulla has meant to her 20 years later: "Friendship".

Cosimo of Audio Dynamics Sound & Lighting

Cosimo got married in 2005 and has two children. His company has continued to produce larger and larger events, but he has never forgotten his underground rave roots.

Julian Fantino

After his stint as Police Chief of Toronto, Julian Fantino became a Member of Parliament for the Conservative Party of Canada. After his defeat and retirement from politics he announced he was working with Aleafia, one of the many start-ups capitalizing on Canada's July 1, 2018 decriminalization of marijuana.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Beyond having once been a top selling DJ, rave promoter, and radio host, Chris Frolic continues to be a trailblazing entrepreneur. Chris is the co-founder of StealthSeminar, the top automated webinar platform that has generated over 1 billion dollars in revenue for its users.

Chris now likes to work with the next generation of business creators and challenges himself on how he might be a bridge connecting his life experiences with new outlets.

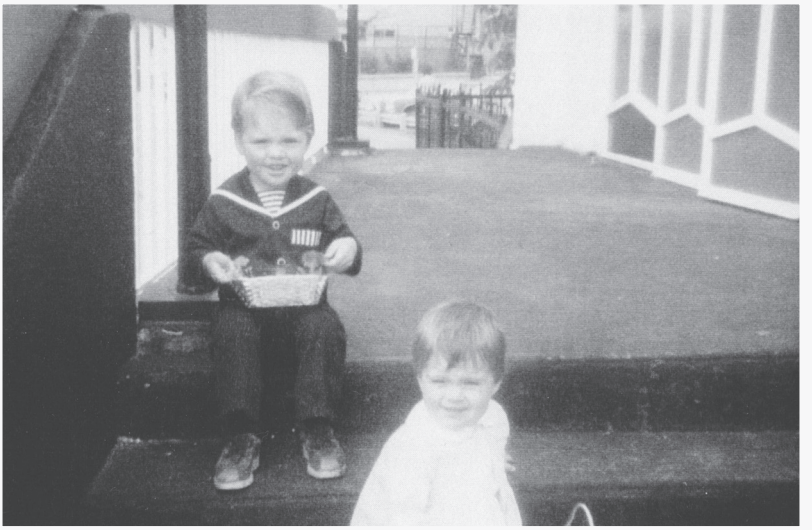
Chris lives in Toronto, happily married to his first and only love of his life, Robin. They have two children, Gavin and Connor. He also owns his own kick-ass private arcade.

Chris shares his hard-earned business lessons today at www.chrisfrolic.com.

Please do me a favour!

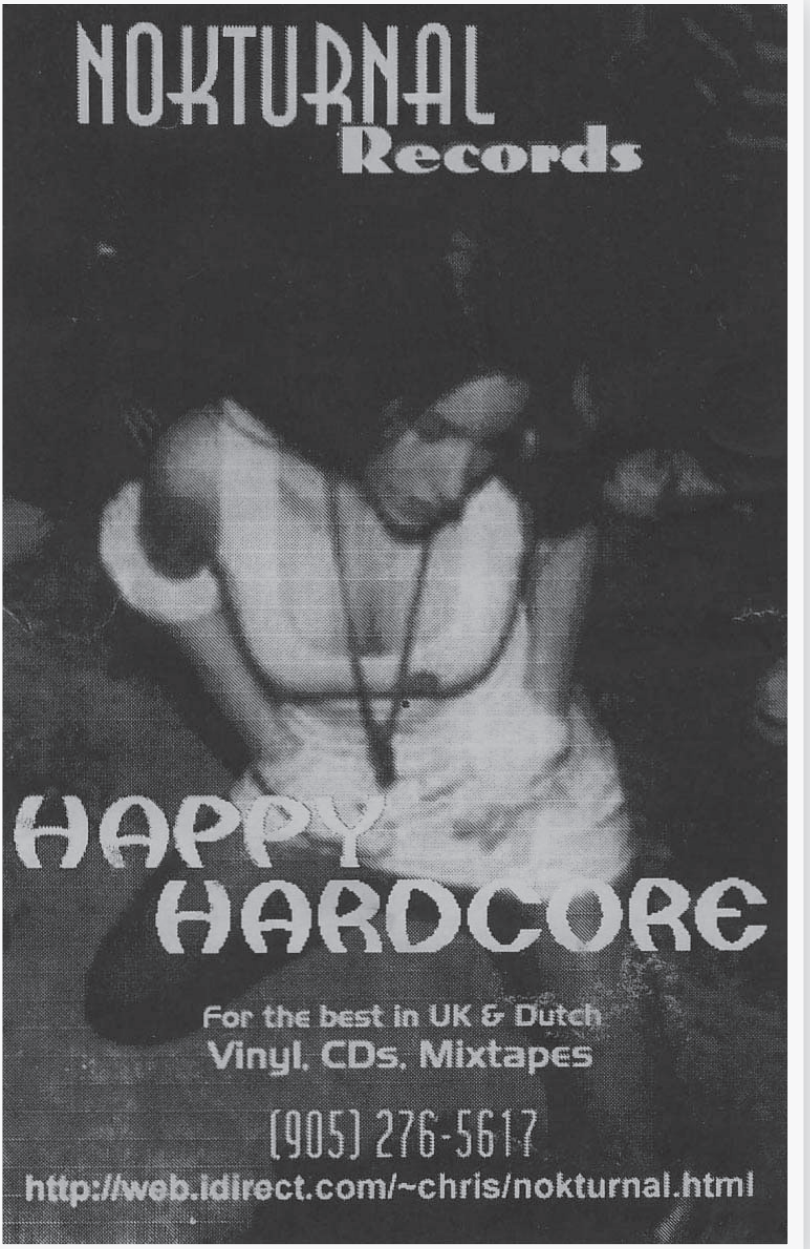
It would help this book if you left it a favourable Amazon review. My hope is that this book can be a definitive account of this very specific time in history and I'd love for more people to experience it. Thanks!

PHOTOS



Chris and his sister, Tara

Chris attending a rave (1995).



Chris would photocopy these to hand out at raves.

First photo of Chris & Robin (1997).

Chris living inside his office (1998).

Chris, Klubmasta Will and Phil from Phryl (2000).

Chris and Don Berns (Dr Trance) (1999).

Chris and George (2003).

From left to right, DJ Slam, MC Charlie B, DJ Spock, DJ Slipmatt, Anabolic Frolic (1999).

Chris in centre, at Slammin' Vinyl Record Store in London, with Jimmy J on the right (1997).

Chris with MC Ruff, Club Labyrinth, London (1997).

MC E-by-gum on stage at Hullablaoo! (1999).

Chris with MC Magika and MC Stixxman at Niagara Falls (1998).

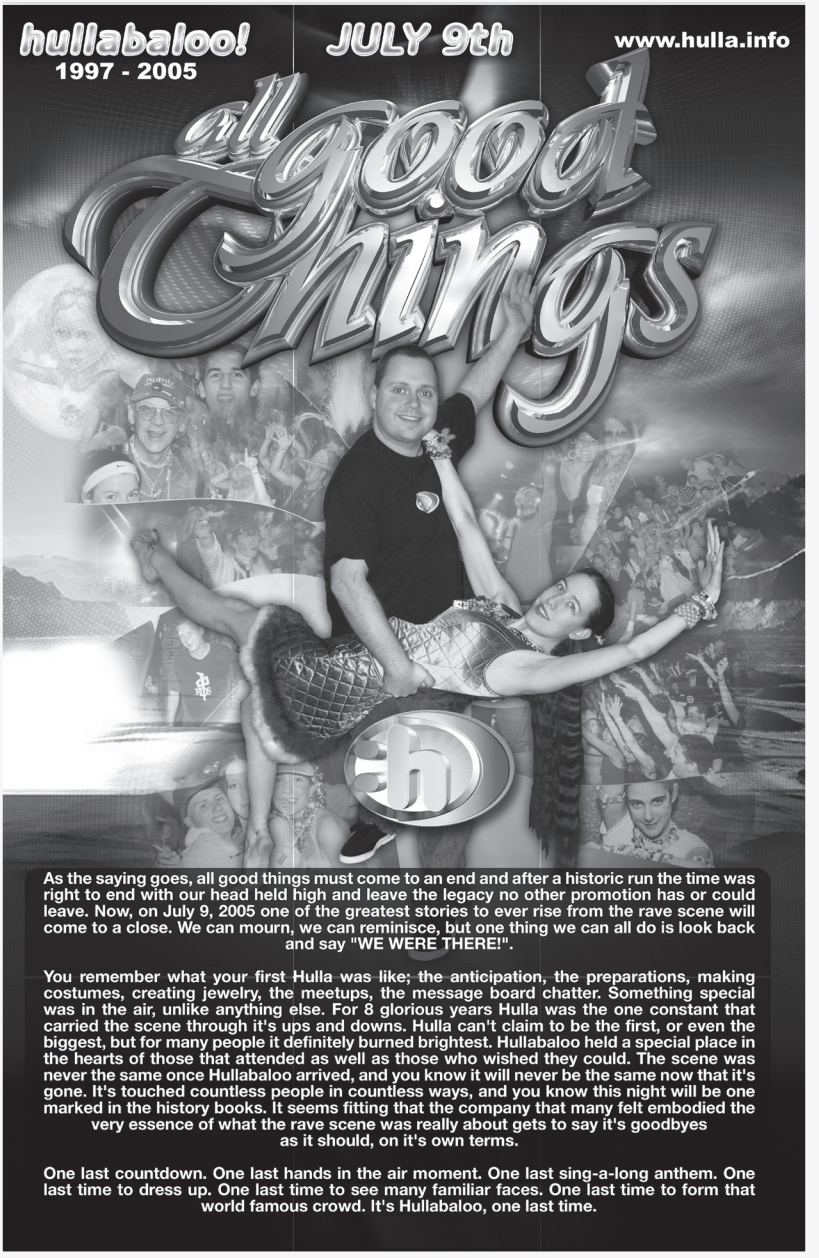
Cosimo of Audio Dynamics (1998).

Chris and Tommy back stage at Hullabaloo! (2003).

Frolic's mom on stage at Hullabaloo! (1999).

Robin, Chris and his uncle, Yuri at Hullabaloo! (2005).

Chris and MC Storm back stage at Hullabaloo! (2007).



As the saying goes, all good things must come to an end and after a historic run the time was right to end with our head held high and leave the legacy no other promotion has or could leave. Now, on July 9, 2005 one of the greatest stories to ever rise from the rave scene will come to a close. We can mourn, we can reminisce, but one thing we can all do is look back and say "WE WERE THERE!".

You remember what your first Hulla was like; the anticipation, the preparations, making costumes, creating jewelry, the meetups, the message board chatter. Something special was in the air, unlike anything else. For 8 glorious years Hulla was the one constant that carried the scene through it's ups and downs. Hulla can't claim to be the first, or even the biggest, but for many people it definitely burned brightest. Hullabaloo held a special place in the hearts of those that attended as well as those who wished they could. The scene was never the same once Hullabaloo arrived, and you know it will never be the same now that it's gone. It's touched countless people in countless ways, and you know this night will be one marked in the history books. It seems fitting that the company that many felt embodied the very essence of what the rave scene was really about gets to say it's goodbyes as it should, on it's own terms.

One last countdown. One last hands in the air moment. One last sing-a-long anthem. One last time to dress up. One last time to see many familiar faces. One last time to form that world famous crowd. It's Hullabaloo, one last time.

Chris and Robin saying Goodbye at Hullabaloo! All Good Things (2005).

Emotions at All Good Things (2005).

Friendship Crew emotions at All Good Things (2005).

A magnificent goodbye (2005).

The Frolics (2018).

BOOK BONUS:

To see more photos, go to:
https://www.anabolic-frolic.com/bonus/